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The Roles of Facilitators in Implementation and Effectiveness of In-School Suspension (ISS): A Qualitative Study

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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Gia Renee Gray entitled "The Roles of Facilitators in Implementation and Effectiveness of In-School Suspension (ISS): A Qualitative Study." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

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The Roles of Facilitators in Implementation and Effectiveness of In-School Suspension (ISS): A Qualitative Study

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to all of the students I served in ISS. You helped me become more aware of issues that impact high school students' lives. You also made me more eager to affect positive change in our public school system. I learned so much from you. Thank you!

I also dedicate this work to my mother, Aida Billingsley, and my father, Robert Gray. You taught me the value of hard work, education, and critical thinking. But, more importantly, you taught me the meaning of kindness and good character. Thank you!

The support of my brother and sister, Bill and LaTonya Lundy, helped me enter and remain in this doctoral program. Thank you!

To the MVP in my life, my daughter, Juwairiyah NaGia Abdul-Halim! Your cooperation made it possible for me to complete my work. Thank you!

Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my grandparents, Wilbur and Mary Ellen Jones. Two African Americans, born in 1917 and 1920, who were college educated. Grand-mama, although it's a little later in life, I not only have that one "little piece of paper" you talked about so often, I have three. You set the standard for the ladies in the family. Thank you!

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Throughout life, we are told to be leaders and not followers. So, I understand the importance of that belief. I studied leadership in an academic setting for four years and it wasn't until I entered this program that I truly started looking at most situations through a leadership lens. Ultimately, I have learned that leadership is not a job or a position. Instead, leadership is a way of life. It is my belief that leaders are born (not made) and I am grateful to know a few. Throughout this journey, the following people have been influential leaders who have impacted my success in this program:

Rhonda Cecchin, Jim French, and Mr. Miller are previous supervisors in various positions I held prior to entering this program. As I studied my coursework and began my research, I always thought of these three people. They are friendly, equitable, and professional. I appreciate having these supervisors as a guide to reflect on what true leadership in action should look like.

I worked full-time while earning my degree and God blessed me to begin most days receiving encouraging words from the nicest ladies at the Arena. Mrs. Eloise, Pam, and Regina not only prepared 7a delicious breakfast for me and my daughter, they were kind, funny, and supportive of my goals. To them, they were just being themselves. To me, they helped motivate me to strive harder each day to complete my degree.

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Throughout this program, my father, Robert Gray, has offered helpful information regarding my school work. In addition, he continuously expressed being proud of me for obtaining this degree.

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Last but not least, I want to praise the Lord God Almighty. I had one thing planned for my life but He saw the best in me and planned something else. Truly, He is the best of planners! His provisions, faithfulness, and kindness far exceed my wildest dreams. Because of who He is in my life, I am not ashamed to say that I believe in Him, I love Him, and without Him, I am nothing. I accept and appreciate all the favors from my Lord.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine In-School Suspension (ISS) facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. An important effect linked to participation in ISS is the decreased likelihood of high school graduation for students assigned to the program. There is also a notable gap in the literature regarding the role and effectiveness of ISS in helping students get back on track. Similarly, little is known about ISS facilitators' beliefs and perspectives about the program.

A basic qualitative design utilizing in-depth interviews was implemented. Participants included six high school ISS facilitators in one southeastern school district. A thematic analysis of the interviews was conducted following a general inductive approach. Eight themes emerged: 1) facilitator roles, 2) administrator expectations and support, 3) reasons students are assigned to ISS, 4) ISS daily schedule, 5) ISS as a safe and effective place 6) relationship with students, 7) professional development, and 8) room for improvement.

The findings provided implications for educators and researchers. This included the need to create a task force at the school level that includes key stakeholders, establish uniform requirements across the district for the role of ISS facilitator, and offer professional development opportunities to ISS facilitators. Additional recommendations included consideration for the perspectives of ISS facilitators and including their input in relevant conversations, providing support for ISS facilitators in the form of a liaison, and conducting long term research on students assigned to ISS. Furthermore, the need to research relationships between teachers and students who have been assigned to ISS and researching reasons the punitive ISS model is implemented more so than other ISS models is equally important. Finally, the hiring process for

ISS facilitators, and investigating the functionality of ISS as it relates to the overall well-being of students should be studied as well.

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CHAPTER 1
Introduction

For the fifth time this month, Wilbur has been assigned to Southern High School's Inschool suspension (ISS) program. This time, Wilbur passed gas, excessively, and did not excuse himself. Wilbur also bit his nails and spat them all over the floor. In addition, Wilbur stapled his arm which caused him to begin bleeding. Along with Wilbur, Robert, a special education student, has been assigned to ISS. As a special education student, Robert should have been monitored closely by qualified staff while in In-School Suspension (ISS). However, this did not happen. Consequently, Robert beat on his desk and cried throughout the day. Robert also did not complete any schoolwork due to the fact that none of his teachers provided any assignments. Finally, Eloise and Bill also have been assigned to ISS. All day, both students refused to do any schoolwork. Instead, they texted on their phone, slept, and talked back whenever they were asked to complete their work. All four of these students have the following in common: they regularly miss valuable instructional time with a certified teacher, they are disruptive while assigned to ISS, they continue to be assigned to ISS, and are showing no signs of improvement.

Although it is difficult to find a uniform definition for ISS, according to Theriot and Dupper (2010), ISS removes students from regular classroom settings, as punishment, for a specific amount of time. The purpose of ISS is to provide an alternative to out-of-school suspension for students who have committed a disciplinary infraction worthy of punishment (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). As a previous ISS facilitator for five years, I sought strategies to assist with all of the above-mentioned scenarios. During my quest to find solutions to various issues I

was dealing with during my work with ISS, I realized there was a limited amount of literature regarding the effectiveness and implementation of ISS programs. In addition, the administration at my school did not provide any type of support to the ISS program, which made my plight more challenging.

During this time, I was also pursuing a master's degree in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Adult Education. In the summer of 2010, I took an action research course from Dr. John Peters who is known for creating the DATA-DATA action research model. The first DATA of this action research model is an acronym for Describe, Analyze, Theorize, and Act (Peters, 1991). The second DATA is an acronym for Design, Analyze, (Re) Theorize, and Act (1991). In Dr. Peter's class, we were encouraged to analyze our work environments and use the DATA-DATA action research model to conduct research. Although we never intended to complete all components of the DATA-DATA action research model during this summer session course, I was able to complete all of the components of the first DATA acronym and the Design portion of the second DATA acronym.

Parson and Brown (2002) described action research as a way for teachers to solve problems in their own classrooms. Likewise, in this instance, action research involved looking at my role as an ISS facilitator in terms of identifying issues in our classroom and contributions I could make regarding potential solutions. Working through multiple steps of Peter's DATADATA action research model allowed me to understand better the issues I faced as a facilitator of

ISS. Through my initial research, it was also clear that I needed assistance from my colleagues

to ensure the success of our ISS program. Unfortunately, I was met with resistance and was unable to finish the study.

Shortly after completing the master's degree program, I entered a doctoral degree program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. I still had a desire to learn more about the facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. Fortunately, my doctoral degree program allowed me to continue the research.

Statement of the Problem

My previous insider experience as an ISS facilitator provided me with first-hand knowledge regarding challenges within ISS programs. Researchers have identified significant challenges regarding the effectiveness of ISS programs. These problems include the lack of influence programs have on students' academic progress and their problem solving skills (Hochman & Worner, 1987). In addition, some rooms where ISS is housed are isolated from the rest of the school, which tends to cut off any type of contact (Garibaldi, 1979). Added to that, there is very little follow-up with students upon leaving the program (Mizell, 1978), which leads to repeated offenses (Hrabak & Settles, 1990).

The purpose of ISS programs is to provide an alternative to out-of-school suspension for students who have behaved in a manner that warrants disciplinary action (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). Researchers have revealed issues within ISS programs, though much of what has been published is dated. Further, there is little, if any, information regarding perspectives of ISS facilitators who work most closely with students during the preliminary stages of ISS assignment. Finally, it is important to uncover effective strategies for facilitating these students' reentry into the classroom and ways of ensuring they do not return to ISS. Because the ISS

facilitator has direct and prolonged contact with students assigned to the program, this focus on facilitators' experiences may provide valuable information in terms of getting students academically back on track.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine In-School Suspension (ISS) facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. Insights from these facilitators may add a valuable contribution to the discussion regarding problems, as well as potential solutions, for ISS programs, hopefully resulting in effective strategies for ensuring student success.

Significance of the Study

One of the most significant effects linked to participation in ISS is the decreased likelihood of matriculation and high school graduation for students who are assigned to ISS. Johnston (1989) found only approximately one-third of students who had been assigned to ISS graduated high school traditionally. Similarly, over a decade later, Rausch and Skiba (2004) found students who were suspended generally performed negatively in school, a contributing factor to low graduation rates. Identifying ways to get these students back on track may help improve graduation rates and have longer-term effects on their lives.

Further, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding the role and effectiveness of ISS. Specifically, there is no identifiable published research related to ISS facilitators' roles in implementation and effectiveness as it relates to the students served.

Terminology

- ISS is an educational environment in place to accommodate students who exhibit behaviors contrary to school standards.

- ISS facilitator is an employee who serves students who have been assigned to ISS and is the liaison between students and all other stakeholders in the educational environment.
- Exclusionary discipline occurs when students are removed from normal classroom settings as a result of misbehavior.

Research Questions

1. How do ISS facilitators perceive their role in the implementation of ISS?
2. How do ISS facilitators perceive the effectiveness of ISS as a disciplinary referral program for students assigned to the program?
3. What suggestions do ISS facilitators have for improving the ISS program?

Research Design

A basic qualitative research design (Merriam 2002) was utilized for this study. This study included interviews with ISS facilitators, who served in the role for 0-15 years. The ages of the ISS facilitators ranged from 30-62. The facilitators were also black and white females and males. Data analysis involved a general inductive approach (Merriam, 2002).

Delimitations

This study is delimited to the perspective of ISS facilitators, their role in the ISS program as it relates to students, and their perceptions on strategies for improvement. The study is further delimited to the perspective of high school ISS facilitators. This study does not address the perspective of ISS facilitators working in elementary and middle schools. I did not focus on other stakeholders who play a role in the ISS program such as administrators, teachers, staff,

students, and parents. Finally, the study only includes information regarding the ISS program opposed to other forms of exclusionary discipline.

Limitations

While qualitative methodology is thorough and seeks in-depth information, it is not all encompassing. Specifically, I did not concentrate on additional factors such as the political climate at the school or the district office. In addition, although qualitative research allowed for in-depth interviews, I only interviewed facilitators from one school district as opposed to interviewing facilitators from multiple school districts. In addition, the perspectives of administrators, parents and teachers were not included.

Although I did seek to establish, develop, and maintain a non-threatening relationship, I was still an outsider. Not being able to establish such a relationship with each participant potentially impacted the interviews in a maladaptive way.

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I introduced the research problem and described the issues related to ISS including the lack of literature surrounding facilitators' role(s) in ISS' implementation and effectiveness as related to students. In addition, I identified the purpose of the study, significance of this research, research questions, delimitations and limitations. Added to that, this chapter included relevant terms that will be used throughout the study. Next, I provided information on the methodology. In Chapter Two, I will provide an in depth discussion of the literature regarding school disciplinary practices in American schools, teacher perspectives on disciplinary referral, out-of-school suspension/zero tolerance, outcomes for students suspended from school, ISS models, designing effective ISS programs, effectiveness of ISS programs, and

the role of ISS facilitators. In Chapter Three, I include a discussion outlining the methodology I used throughout the study. Chapter Four provides a discussion of the major findings of the study. This includes a detailed description of my participants' perspectives of the ISS program overall and specifically as it relates to its implementation and effectiveness. Chapter Five offers the conclusions of the study based on the findings identified in Chapter Four. In addition, Chapter Five concludes with a discussion of implications, recommendations for practice, and suggestions future research.

CHAPTER 2
Literature Review

ISS is a common disciplinary measure implemented to remove students causing disruptions from the classroom (Brown, 2007). However, ISS programs have some challenges in terms of effectiveness. These challenges include the lack of influence ISS programs have on students' academic progress and their problem solving skills (Hochman & Worner, 1987). There is also very little follow-up with students upon leaving the ISS program (Mizell, 1978). While there is some research concerning what effective ISS programs include, there is no research concerning the facilitators' role(s) in ISS's implementation and effectiveness. This review addresses the related research on disciplinary practices, ISS and related programs, and outcomes related to assignment and participation in such programs.

Search Procedures

In compiling articles for this literature review, I utilized the University of Tennessee's library databases. This search included Eric, ProQuest, Sage, and accessing the A-Z index for a variety of additional journal articles. Words I searched included, "ISS," "the effectiveness of ISS," "effective ISS programs," and "concerns about ISS programs." I also utilized Google Scholar to obtain relevant literature.

Although there is not much current research on ISS, I was able to identify the most researched topics regarding school discipline. I categorized and reviewed the literature in the following order:

- School Disciplinary Practices in American Schools
- Teacher Perspectives on Disciplinary Referral
- Out-of-school Suspension/Zero Tolerance

- Outcome for Students Suspended from School
- ISS Models
- Designing Effective ISS Program
- Effectiveness of ISS Programs
- The Role of ISS Facilitators

School Disciplinary Practices in American Schools

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2011), there are a variety of disciplinary issues present among the nation's schools. Disciplinary issues that rate highest are student bullying and gang activities. Other disciplinary issues include student acts of disrespect for teachers verbally and otherwise, student harassment of students, overall disorder in the classroom, and cult or extremist activities.

Disciplinary issues have long been prevalent in American schools. Originally, measures such as verbal warnings, corporal punishment, and after-school detention were in place in an attempt to correct inappropriate behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Currently, similar disciplinary measures are still in place. In the past few decades, ISS, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion were added to the list of actions taken to address discipline (Townsend, 2000).

During the 1980s, drug/gang activities and possession of weapons among students caused concern for overall school safety. As a result, zero-tolerance policies were introduced as federal and state guidelines to severely punish students who engaged in such activities (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). However, over time, these policies were amended to include severely punishing students for lesser infractions including use or possession of tobacco, school disruption, and other less violent behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Teacher Perspectives on School Discipline

In most cases, teachers provide disciplinary referrals for students. Therefore, it is important to know teacher perceptions regarding disciplinary policy to understand how teachers determine if referrals are warranted. Bibou-Nakou (2000) studied teacher interpretations of behavioral issues and found teachers grouped students together based on mainstream society categorizations such as good and problem. For instance, some students were considered to be good while others were considered to be problem students. Students were also classified based on their level of academic achievement (high and low). Bibou-Nakou (2000) also stated that teachers provided additional (negative) information regarding students and their families to further substantiate claims related to misbehavior.

Irwin and Nucci (2004) sought to identify teachers' interpretations of student behavior in a study involving 120 pre-service (beginning) and 120 in-service (veteran) teachers. The teachers were asked if they believed that the cause of student's misbehavior was due to external factors or internal factors. In-service and pre-service teachers believed that misbehavior was based on external factors such as classroom distractions. However, the in-service teachers believed students' misbehavior was intentional. Another issue is the teachers' level of confidence in their classroom management ability. Martin, Linfoot, and Stephenson (1999) found that the level of the teachers' confidence played a significant role in determining whether or not a disciplinary referral form was issued. Teachers who were less confident in their abilities were more likely to refer students to be punished. At the same time, teachers reported a need for more information regarding how to best manage the classroom.

Even in cases where counseling services were available as a referral to assist with student behavior, teachers chose to send students to the office, citing a lack of time and lack of confidence that resources might be available for only utilizing referrals (Martin et al., 1999). At the same time, Noguera (2003) found that teachers do want to help students learn to behave better, however, with current time constraints and additional accountability measures in place, it was easier to have students suspended than try to assist in adjusting their behavior**.** The remainder of this review focuses of types of suspension before moving to the role of the facilitator in ensuring its effectiveness. Out-of-school suspension and Zero tolerance programs will be reviewed before moving to the alternative, ISS.

Out-of-School Suspension/Zero Tolerance

Out-of-school suspension is a practice that removes students from school, due to misbehavior, for a period of time usually less than 10 days (Meek, 2009). The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) provides information suggesting there are risks and disadvantages related to out-of-school suspension programs such as allowing time for suspended students to get into (legal) trouble while away from school. In addition, students given out-of-school suspension fall further behind in their schoolwork. Atkins, McKay, Frazier, Jacobsons, Arvanitis, Cunningham, Brown, and Lambrecht (2002) suggested utilizing suspension as discipline often creates a situation with more students being out of school, suspended, opposed to being in school. Casella (2003) noted that when students are suspended from school, they are missing out on learning, which negatively impacts their studies upon returning to school.

Christle, Nelson, and Jolivette (2004) suggested a cycle of failure is initiated when students become frustrated due to either not understanding or becoming bored with their

schoolwork. These feelings often result in behavioral issues, which can lead to suspension. Christle et al. (2004) advised it is important to break this cycle; otherwise, students will continue experiencing behavioral issues or begin engaging in additional counterproductive behaviors such as dropping out of school or breaking the law.

In addition to preventing students from having access to schoolwork, researchers have shown suspending students does not result in a decrease in student misbehavior (Kajs, 2006). Overall, removing students from school seems to have a negative impact (American Psychological Association, 2008). Atkins et al. (2002) found students who received out-ofschool suspensions were more likely to receive an increased number of discipline referrals as well. In addition, out-of-school suspensions are sometimes interpreted as a reward for students and teachers (Atkins, et al., 2002). Meaning, some students given out-of-school suspension do not want to be at school anyway. At the same time, teachers sometimes view these same students behavior to be disruptive to the learning process.

There is no universal definition for zero tolerance policies. However, zero tolerance typically involves, "more severe penalties, primarily suspension and expulsion, for both major and minor violations of the school disciplinary code, in order to send a message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated" (Skiba, 2010, p. S4H35-1). Disciplinary guidelines have been predominately geared toward zero tolerance policies since the 1990s (Gregory & Cornell, 2009). As communities became more concerned about school safety, zero tolerance policies were implemented in response to the violence that was taking place in schools (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). Now, approximately 94% of the nation's public schools utilize zero tolerance policies.

Over time, zero tolerance policies have transitioned to include severely punishing students for lesser infractions. These lesser infractions include use or possession of tobacco, school disruption, and other less violent behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). An example of how this policy has evolved is clear in a study by Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997). The researchers analyzed approximately 17,000 middle school students' referral and suspension rates in 20 urban and suburban schools. Results revealed students from urban schools most often were suspended for non-compliance/insubordination issues. However, students from suburban schools were only suspended for more severe offenses. Mendez and Knoff (2003) also reported that 74% of suspensions in middle school were based on disobedience as opposed to the one percent that was due to serious disciplinary infractions.

Outcomes for Students Suspended from School

While some researchers have suggested out-of-school suspension/zero tolerance assists in preventing future misbehavior by acting as a deterrent to other students, there has been no evidence showing that removing students from school improves behavior (American Psychological Association, 2008). Further, students who are suspended from school are unable to develop healthy psychological and sociological relationships (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004).

Arcia (2006) conducted a quantitative study over three years involving suspended students' achievement in school. During ninth grade, 38% of students were suspended at least once in the academic school year. Twenty-six percent of suspended students were suspended 10 or more days during this timeframe as well. Upon return to school, suspended students were not able to stay current, academically. This is due to students with lower level reading skills having higher suspension rates than students on higher reading levels. Ultimately, the suspension rates

among some students impacted the dropout rate. Twenty-one percent of students suspended between 1 and 10 days, 32% of students suspended between 11-20 days, and 43% of student suspended more than 21 days dropped out of school within three years after their ninth-grade year began (Arcia, 2006). In several states, there are no laws requiring schools to provide educational opportunities to students while suspended/expelled (Martinez, 2009). Therefore, students fall even further behind in their academic work, making it harder to stay in school. Further, students who are continuously suspended and expelled from school have a greater chance of developing a criminal record (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003).

In-School Suspension (ISS) Models

ISS refers to an educational environment put in place to accommodate students who exhibit behaviors contrary to school standards. Students are assigned to ISS due to various disciplinary infractions. As a result, they are removed from the classroom. However, since this program is usually housed in schools, students are able to maintain a discipline record that does not reflect any out-of-school suspensions (Troyan, 2003). Theoretically, students are able to stay current, academically (Brown, 2007). In addition, ISS provides a place for students to be accounted for, while being disciplined, as opposed to being away from school and potentially getting into additional trouble (Morris & Howard, 2003). Simonsen, Jeffrey-Persall, Sugai, and McCurdy (2011) found that the purpose for ISS was to not only assist in maintaining students' educational requirements but also to improve their behavior such that returning to the classroom is beneficial. There are three main models used to operate ISS programs (Morris & Howard, 2003). These three models provide the main reasons students receive infractions and are assigned to ISS. Along with that, strategies for correcting behavior are involved in these models.

First, there is the punitive model. This model is centered on the belief that students act out due to a desire to create trouble in the classroom. Once the student is punished, it is believed that the behavior will cease. This environment provides strict rules for students. Rules include not being able to talk while assigned to ISS and having to work the entire day on course assignments or some other tasks related to being disciplined. While this model works for some students, other students, "…deliberately behave in ways to get themselves removed and placed on out-of school suspensions" (Coleman, 2003, p. 134). Often, the punitive model does not provide room for growth, academically, and this model does not address the issues that resulted in the ISS assignment (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

Second, the academic model is based on the belief that students act out due to learning challenges (Morris & Howard, 2003). These challenges result in feelings of defeat and desperation. A change in behavior only occurs when students meet the necessary academic competencies and begin performing better, academically. Hrabak and Settles (1990) indicated that in order to address academic issues, ISS staff members should evaluate students and identify their grade level. This will aid in the development of strategies to assist students in their weak academic areas. Even when this evaluation takes place, there is an assumption that students will receive an adequate substitution for classroom assignments. This model also assumes the ISS facilitator is qualified to evaluate academic issues and teach needed skills among students assigned to ISS (Short, 1988). Troyan (2003) disputed the validity of this model by emphasizing that teachers are unable to create an identical lesson for students who have been assigned. In addition, the ISS facilitators hardly ever are certified to teach any subject area. Therefore, students still miss out on instructional time while assigned to ISS.

Third, the therapeutic model originates from the belief that students are experiencing a problem that has resulted in misbehavior (Morris & Howard, 2003). Counseling and following up with students after leaving ISS is the proposed solution, but needs to be in place prior to assignment (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). During counseling sessions, students need to understand what rule was broken and the rationale for assigning them to ISS. Students should also acknowledge the attitude they possessed when they got in trouble. In addition, other issues that likely contributed to their being assigned to ISS should be addressed as well. Doing so will assist students in reflecting on their behavior and healthier choices they could have made. Hochman and Worner (1987) suggested that counseling students assigned to ISS was a necessary component in order for students to adjust their behavior. In addition, Hochman and Worner (1987) believed providing counseling has the potential to raise students' self-esteem and make them more aware of their mal-adaptive behaviors.

While no evaluation studies have been published regarding the punitive and academic models for ISS, one study was linked to the therapeutic model. Hochman and Worner (1987) evaluated the benefits of having group counseling included in a local ISS program. The researchers compared two groups of students assigned to ISS to determine if counseling intervention would have an impact on the students. Students were divided between the group that did offer counseling and the group that did not offer counseling. Data were collected for a little over seven months after students left ISS. Data also included demographics and follow-up questionnaires and interviews with teachers and students. The counseling administered was based on *The Beat It-Taking Charge of Your Life* pilot program implemented in 1984 by a group of Newport News, VA guidance counselors (Hochman & Worner, 1987). This counseling

included mostly discussions. Students also met with a counselor once a week for six weeks and set goals while addressing self-esteem issues. Findings from the Hochman and Worner (1987) study showed the group of students who were not offered counseling was 15 times more likely to be referred to the principal's office, 13 times as likely to be returned to ISS, and overall more likely to be suspended out of school. None of the members of the group who received counseling returned to ISS. Neither group showed any significant change in their grade point average. However, the group that was counseled did show more stability in their grades as opposed to the group that was not counseled as their grades continued to decline. Attendance was also better with the group that received counseling compared the group who did not. Teachers also noticed an overall improvement among the members of the group that received counseling. While the age of this study calls the findings into question, these results represent one of the few attempts at evaluating the effectiveness of ISS. The positions of Hrabak and Settles (1990) and Hochman and Worner (1987) were similar regarding counseling being of some benefit to students assigned to ISS. However, limited studies reflect positive changes in behavior as a result of participating in counseling sessions (Vanderslice, 1999). Evaluating counseling within the ISS program aligns well with the fundamental design of effective ISS programs.

Designing Effective ISS Programs

According to Sheets (1996, p. 88), the combination of creating a mission statement for ISS and developing structured policies that are "complete, concise, clear, modifiable, and flexible" are necessary factors to establish and maintain a successful ISS program. Vanderslice (1999) argued for the importance of establishing a mission statement that gives details regarding

elements of the program and its goals. In addition, Vanderslice (1999) believed creating the mission statement should be the responsibility of all stakeholders. Equally important, Mizell (1978) advised that the implementation of ISS programs should be the responsibility of all stakeholders. Hrabak and Settles (1990) explained how effective ISS programs should operate; emphasizing the whole school should work together including parents.

With regard to designing disciplinary policy, to justify assigning students to ISS, Mizell (1978) suggested having specific criteria and procedures for referring students. Meaning, ISS should not be the answer for all situations involving misbehavior. In addition, one person should be chosen for the role of screening all referrals. This person must be trusted to properly evaluate referrals and make the best decision for students based on individual situations. Due process was also an element Mizell (1978) emphasized in terms of designing an effective and consistent program. In affording adequate due process, students are given the opportunity to share their perspective about the situation in question. Length of assignment should also be taken into consideration and should not be more than three days.

Sheets (1996) suggested that an effective ISS program also should include an additional evaluative component. The evaluative component measures student behavioral changes over time to assist in identifying accomplishments and changes that need to be made in the program. An evaluation form should be given to all staff and students who participate in the program. In addition, Sheets (1996) suggested developing a committee to evaluate the ISS program. The committee members should contribute by assessing the current program and identifying any changes that need to be made.

Finally, Mizell (1978) advised that the location of ISS in schools should be situated away from areas in which regular activities take place in school. The room should have instructional materials; yet, it should not be as aesthetically pleasing as regular classrooms. In addition, it is optional whether or not students assigned to ISS should be able to eat with others not assigned to ISS as opposed to only eating with fellow students assigned to ISS. Patterson (1985) believed students assigned to ISS should be isolated from other students and from each other. Meaning, there should be significant distance between the students while seated. In addition, Patterson (1985) advised that students assigned to ISS should not be able to communicate with each other in any form. Short (1988) agreed with these recommendations, finding the following components were necessary for an effective ISS program: 1) students assigned to ISS must be isolated from all students including those also assigned to ISS and during lunch period; 2) students assigned to ISS should not be assigned for more than five days; 3) students assigned to ISS must have restricted privileges; and 5) students assigned to ISS must be provided with assignments from their classroom teachers.

Despite the three models articulated by Morris and Howard (2003) and evidence-based suggestions from the previous researchers, most ISS programs are considered to be "little more than holding tanks" (Dupper, Theriot & Craun, 2009, p. 10), rather than programs focusing on changing student behavior. At the same time, the elements necessary for successful ISS programs such as the promotion of high attendance rates, academic progress, and strong selfesteem and self-discipline are the same elements necessary for students to be successful in school (Cameron, 2006). In other words, the manner in which ISS programs are conducted do not truly address issues students are dealing with which resulted in their assignment. Therefore,

modified behavior is not the outcome of this type of environment. In addition, ISS programs that are not thoughtfully developed and implemented are challenging in terms of positive outcomes (Theriot & Dupper, 2010).

Effectiveness of ISS Programs

Many of the studies of ISS programs are dated; however, findings offer considerations for the present study. As a result, each study appearing in this section is reviewed separately and in greater detail than normal. In addition, some of the literature is not provided in chronological order in an effort to organize research based on relevancy and themes.

Sullivan (1989) conducted a mixed-methods study to determine steps needed to maintain effectiveness of three ISS programs already in existence. The research design included interviews, surveys, and document analysis. The researcher found each of the programs studied experienced multiple changes after starting as a result of inadequate planning, insufficient funding, unsatisfactory monitoring measures, and variations in academic assistance, counseling, follow-up, as well as a sub-par evaluation design. These variations resulted in decreased program effectiveness. Sullivan's (1989) primary recommendation for designing an effective ISS program was for members from all areas of the school to fully commit to the program for it to be successful. Specifically, members must begin by creating an updated philosophy regarding how to implement the program and its evaluation.

Johnston (1987) took a different research approach by seeking to identify the views of high school students regarding their assignment to a highly structured ISS program. The school's principal and assistant principal made all decisions regarding student assignments. Students were only allowed to communicate with the ISS facilitator, lunch was eaten in the ISS

room, and the expectation was that students would complete their course work. In addition, there was an "administrative philosophy" regarding ISS not being misused as a place to send all students with behavioral issues. As a result, students were assigned a maximum of two times, annually, to ISS. This "exploratory/descriptive" study included a 13-question (open-ended) survey distributed to 111 students requesting information regarding their experiences while in ISS. Although the findings were limited, some valuable information emerged. For instance, most students (71 of 107) believed spending time in ISS was an appropriate disciplinary measure for their misbehavior and that they had benefited from the assignment. In addition, 92 students reported talking with their parents about being assigned to ISS and 72 of those students indicated their parents were also in agreement with the assignment. An additional eight students stated their parents were upset and five students' parents believed the assignment was unfair. Seven students did not indicate a response from their parents. Further, these students did not believe they would be referred to ISS in the future. There also seemed to be some confusion among the new students regarding the consequences of attending classes (a reason for ISS referral). Finally, once assigned, students did not like being isolated from others (Johnston, 1987).

Mendez and Sanders (1981) also conducted a study involving surveys and observations, to determine the effectiveness of ISS programs. This mixed-methods study was different from Johnston's (1987) in that Mendez's and Sanders' (1981) study only mentioned a single teacher/instructor and only occasionally an administrator or director being present. Findings revealed students assigned to ISS based on low attendance continued having low attendance. In addition, almost half of the 1,300 students studied returned to ISS after their initial assignment. There was also a substantial difference (40%) in the number of students who graduated after

assignment to ISS compared to those who were never assigned. Mendez and Sanders (1981) interpreted ISS to be ineffective based on the attendance and graduation rates not improving.

Harvey and Moosha (1977) led a pilot study establishing an ISS program as an alternative to out-of-school suspension. This study was conducted to determine if the ISS approach would be more effective than the traditional out-of-school suspension program in one middle school and one high school. Students were assigned to ISS and given a contract with rules to sign. The contract included assignments students were expected to be complete while in ISS. Assignments were determined by the number of times students had previously been assigned to ISS. Assignments were distributed in this manner to assist in forming positive behavior from students. In addition, students did not receive regular course credit for the work completed while in ISS. The ISS facilitator was also permitted to decide if adjustments could be made to students' contracts in terms of the amount of work that had to be completed. Upon completion of the agreed upon assigned work, students were allowed to return to their classes. However, before returning to class, a meeting took place with the assistant principal, the ISS facilitator, parents, and students. Everyone was provided with a report detailing the students' behavior and actions while in ISS. The ISS facilitator also maintained a record with students' completed work.

Findings revealed both schools had a reduction in the total number of suspensions during the school year as compared to previous years. The total number of students suspended was reduced by approximately 42 percent at the middle school and 29 percent at the high school. In addition, the number of students suspended four or more times was reduced by 94 percent at the middle school and by 78 percent at the high school.

Just as subsequent researchers (Sullivan, 1989; Gootman, 1998; Haley & Watson, 2001) recommended, Harvey and Moosha (1977) also noted that the ISS facilitator played a significant role in the program's success. For instance, the facilitator contributed to establishing positive dialogue between the school and parents. Doing so assisted with the parents understanding the school's genuine interest in assisting their child (ren). As a result, parents were also in support of the school even though their child (ren) had been assigned to ISS.

Johnston (1989) researched different outcomes of students assigned to ISS using a quantitative design to examine the high school completion rates of students. Students of the class of 1988 were followed during their sophomore, junior, and senior years. Data were based on class enrollment, total number of ISS assignments, and gender. Major findings for this study revealed that more students were assigned to ISS during their sophomore year (15.8%) than during their junior year (8.9%) and senior year (4.2%). At the same time, during their sophomore year, 7.8% of the males and 8.0% of the females were assigned to ISS. During their junior year, 5.7% of the males and 3.2% of the females were assigned to ISS. Finally, during their senior year, 2.6% of the males and 11.6% of the females were assigned to ISS. Most students were assigned to ISS due to skipping class and/or being disruptive during class. Neither gender assigned to ISS performed well academically. In spite of this, there was no significant change in enrollment for either gender during their senior year. However, only one-third of students who had been assigned to ISS graduated high school traditionally. There was also less than a 50 percent completion rate for both males and females. An additional 9% of those students chose non-traditional ways to complete high school that included extended day school, GED, and summer school. Johnston (1989) did not follow students who left the school system

during the time that this study was conducted. The researcher also did not follow-up with students who did not graduate with their class to determine if they did eventually graduate; however, Johnston (1989) did identify seven students who graduated high school (three with high school diplomas and four with GEDs) within two years of the original graduation date.

Constenbader and Markson (1994) conducted a quantitative study to determine the behaviors that usually result in ISS. Also, these researchers studied the activities and therapies usually in place to assist students who have been assigned to ISS and the attitudes of school administrators regarding fundamental problems students are dealing with who are assigned. A 20-item survey was distributed by mail to 10 states (two states from each region of the United States). The sample was made up of rural (55%), urban (20%), and suburban (24%) schools. Those who responded included principals (59%), vice principals (37%), and ISS staff members (4%). Middle schools made up 31% of the sample, high schools made up 51%, and schools grades 7-12 made 18%. Findings indicated ISS assignments lasted for one school day for 44% of respondents. Approximately 41% of the respondents were assigned for two to four days. There was no significant difference in the rate of ISS assignments between middle and high school students. While Asian-American students were underrepresented in subsamples, African American students were suspended in numbers significantly disproportionate to their total enrollment. Also, repeat offenders accounted for 42% of all students assigned to ISS. Physical aggression was the most common violation that caused students to be assigned to ISS. Students also were assigned frequently for truancy, tardiness, attendance failure, or unexcused absences.

According to Constenbader and Markson (1994), students who were assigned to ISS were required to complete assignments their teachers sent. This only seemed to help students who

were already on grade level. The students who were not on grade level found it difficult to complete assignments as there was no course assistance available to them. The researchers did not factor in the role of parents in terms of how schools included them in the process. In addition, there were no solutions mentioned for those students below grade level who needed to complete their assignments. This specific data is especially important considering lowerachieving students assigned to ISS experience greater gaps in academic achievement than students who are higher achievers (Arcia, 2006).

Summary of ISS Research

ISS provides an in-house environment that prevents out-of-school suspensions from being recorded and allows students to stay current, academically (Troyan, 2003; Brown, 2007). The three main ISS models include punitive, academic, and therapeutic (Morris & Howard, 2003). However, some students are unable to benefit from these models because students would prefer to be at home instead of at school (Coleman, 2003). Also, some classroom teachers are unable to create identical lessons for students assigned to ISS (Troyan, 2003; Hrabak & Settles, 1990). Counseling has the potential to benefit students assigned to ISS (Hrabak & Settles, 1990; Hochman & Worner, 1987); yet, there are some divergent findings that suggest the need for additional research (Vanderslice, 1999).

Unrelated to existing models, researchers have revealed several concerns surrounding the effectiveness of ISS. These include the lack of influence ISS programs have on students' academic progress and problem solving skills (Hochman & Worner, 1987). In addition, there is very little follow-up with students after they have been assigned (Mizell, 1978). Finally, there are a disproportionate number of African American students being sent to ISS (Skiba, 2010).

Students are assigned to ISS for a variety of reasons including low school attendance, skipping class, and being disruptive in class (Mendez & Sanders, 1981; Johnston, 1989). When attempting to remedy these issues by assigning students to ISS, researchers have found it is important to have all stakeholders involved, specific rules in place for the ISS program, and a designated location of the ISS program (Mizell, 1978; Sullivan, 1989).

The Role of the ISS Facilitator

Mizell (1978) advised that all stakeholders' roles were equally important in ensuring ISS is effective. Stakeholders include parents, teachers, administrators, and students. In addition, Mizell (1978) argued ISS programs should be focused around helping students by identifying and resolving the root problems, helping students to develop self-discipline, and providing a framework that allows school personnel to try to achieve goals while also allowing the students outside of ISS to participate in the school's instructional process without disruption. Follow-up meetings are suggested for stakeholders to ensure the issues are being addressed and resolved. Mizel's (1978) recommendations differed from other researchers who suggested only the role of the ISS facilitator be emphasized (Gootman, 1998; Haley & Watson, 2001; Sullivan, 1989).

Sullivan (1989) indicated that for the ISS program to be effective, the facilitator should possess the following skills and qualifications:

- Experience in counseling, social work, or special education.
- Strong classroom management skills.
- An interest in and desire to work with academically and behaviorally troubled students.
- Instructional skills in general academic areas.
- Competence in communicating findings to parents, teachers, and counselors.

- A willingness to seek out a variety of appropriate resources and act as a referral agent when warranted.
- Proficiency in providing a positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning, and
- The ability to relate to pupils in an empathetic, respectful, and consistent manner.

Gootman (1998) advised that ISS facilitators should establish a personal relationship with students while also being steadfast in their firmness regarding their expectations. Haley and Watson (2000) pointed out that ISS facilitators should transition from the role of leader to colearner and lead students to reach their own conclusions regarding their behavior as opposed to telling them. ISS facilitators also should share their own stories and model appropriate behavior during time spent with students.

Morris and Howard (2003) provided descriptions of the three potential models for successful ISS programs; however, none included the role of the ISS facilitator. This and other research reviewed in the previous section demonstrated a gap in the research on the role and perceptions of ISS facilitators in the implementation and effectiveness of the program.

Summary

The research reviewed for this study showed that various issues resulting in students being assigned to ISS often lead to out-of-school suspension (Department of Education, 2012). Suspension policies, and particularly out-of-school suspension often put students at a disadvantage (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). Aside from missing out on learning and socialization, students who are assigned to out-of-school suspensions are much more likely to be subjected to zero-tolerance policies. This leads to increased rates of expulsion as a result of minor disciplinary infractions being described as more severe infractions with discipline to

match (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This is particularly problematic for African American males; being suspended and expelled from school creates a greater chance of following the school-toprison pipeline (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002), which begins with students getting in trouble at the school level. That trouble quickly turns into trouble with the juvenile system and eventually, the adult criminal justice system.

Teachers' view the disciplinary issues in a variety of ways. Some base the measure for misbehavior on media, while others base the measure for misbehavior on the common terms of definitions learned in the educational environment. This includes grouping students into categories of good and problem (Bibou-Nakou, 2000). At the same time, many teachers often do not feel confident enough to manage classroom disturbances on their own (Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999). Instead, they feel more comfortable referring students to the office for punishment. This action is often taken due to lack of experience and time constraints.

Outcomes for suspended/expelled students include dropping out of high school at a higher rate than students who remain in school (Arcia, 2006). Many students who are suspended from school end up becoming a part of the juvenile system. Eventually, some of those students land in the prisons system (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). A first step in this process is referral to ISS.

Decreasing referrals, while a necessary research topic in addressing this concern, is beyond the scope of the present study, which is focused on improving students' experiences during their ISS assignment. Aside from a few models and isolated studies, little is known about the implementation and effectiveness of ISS and particularly the role of the ISS facilitator, who is responsible for the students once assigned. Researchers (Sullivan, 1989; Gootman, 1998;

Haley & Watson, 2001) have recommended emphasizing the role of the ISS facilitator. This study was designed to explore the perspectives of these individuals as a means of promoting a more successful ISS experience.

Organization of the Study

In this chapter, I provided an in depth discussion of the literature regarding school disciplinary practices in American schools, teacher perspectives on disciplinary referral, out-ofschool suspension/zero tolerance, outcomes for students suspended from school, ISS models, designing effective ISS programs, effectiveness of ISS programs, and the role of ISS facilitators In Chapter Three, I will include a discussion outlining the methodology I used throughout the study.

CHAPTER 3
Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine In-School Suspension (ISS) facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. This chapter includes the research questions, research design, setting and participants, information about the interviews, demographics about the site, procedures, data analysis, details about the use of a reflective journal, ethical considerations, validity and trustworthiness, and a positionality statement.

Research Questions

This study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How do ISS facilitators perceive their role in the implementation of ISS?
2. How do ISS facilitators perceive the effectiveness of ISS as a disciplinary referral program for students assigned to the program?
3. What suggestions do ISS facilitators have for improving the ISS program?

Research Design

A basic qualitative research design was utilized for this study. Qualitative research explains issues from the participants' perspective (Merriam, 2002). This study utilized a general inductive approach. A general inductive approach utilizes detailed readings of data to establish concepts and themes, which allows research findings to emerge (Thomas, 2006).

Setting and Participants

In qualitative research, there must be enough participants to ensure the research questions are answered appropriately (Merriam, 2009). I sought to interview high school ISS facilitators in

order to reach a point of saturation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Participants for this study consisted of six (out of 13) high school ISS facilitators from a public school district in the southeast region of the United States. This school district has 87 schools (PK-12) that provide educational services for two cities. At the time of the study, there were 341 administrators, 3,373 teachers, and 55,160 students. The majority of the students were White (77.7%). African American students made up 14.6% of the student population. The rest of the students were divided among Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American/Alaskan. A little more than 3.5% of the student population possessed limited English proficiency and approximately 47% of students were economically disadvantaged. The school system's high school average daily attendance rate was 91.5%, graduation rate was 87.7% and the dropout rate was 2.4%.

Data Collection

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study, I contacted a staff member with the school district to obtain permission to contact high school principals regarding interviewing ISS facilitators. A copy of the approval to conduct the study appears in Appendix A. After emailing each school principal at least twice, I received permission to contact six facilitators. Next, I contacted participants (via email and social media) and provided information regarding the purpose of this study and a request to be interviewed. All participants chose to meet face-to-face for interviews. I advised participants there would be 1-2 interview sessions. Doing so allowed me to interview all participants, individually code, and interview again to verify themes.

Interviews

Participants were provided with a consent form explaining they could withdraw from study at any time and relating the potential risks involved with participating. Upon receipt of the signed consent form, I interviewed each participant and reiterated that follow-up interviews might be scheduled to clarify points and/or raise additional questions after the first session. Participants were also informed member checking would take place to verify the accuracy of their statements (Creswell & Miller, 2002).

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for this study. ISS facilitators were asked 27 open-ended questions with probing and follow-up questions. Those 27 questions were divided into four sections. The sections included questions about perceptions regarding the role of ISS in general and as it relates to students, experiences as a facilitator of ISS, and recommendations for improving the program. The last section asked ISS facilitators to share information about what they felt is important regarding ISS. A copy of the protocol appears in Appendix B. All participants were also provided with my name, position (doctoral student), and the name of my institution and the purpose of this research. The interviews took place at the facilitators' workplace. In addition, the interviews were recorded. I transcribed the interviews which took approximately 30 hours.

Data Analysis

Merriam (1998) described qualitative research as a type of research that establishes the researcher as the instrument for data collection and analysis. Basic qualitative research also allows the researcher to understand better participants' perspectives in order to make meaning of a situation or phenomenon (Merriam, 2002). A commonly used qualitative analysis technique,

the general inductive approach, was utilized in this study. A general inductive approach utilizes detailed readings of data to establish concepts and themes, which allow findings from the study to emerge (Thomas, 2006).

Thomas (2006) provided the following steps for a general inductive approach coding process:

1. Preparing raw data: format interviews in a uniformed manner.
2. Close reading of text: Thoroughly read text until the content is understood in terms of themes and events.
3. Creation of categories: Identify and define categories and themes. These categories are regularly developed phrases or meanings in specific text segments.
4. Overlapping coding and uncoded text: One segment of text may be coded into more than one category. However, no more than 50% of text may be included in one category as most of the text will not likely be directly related to the evaluation objectives.
5. Continuing revision and refinement of category system: Subtopics should be identified if possible.

Finally, the steps taken in the process in the general inductive approach should result in the development of three to eight summary categories. These summary categories should include the researchers' key themes identified in the data. These key themes are the most significant themes based on the research objectives. If more than eight themes emerge from the analysis, it is considered to be incomplete. The researcher must revisit the data and determine if more categories should be combined and/or reassess the significance of themes and/or categories (Thomas, 2006). After completing this process, I analyzed and coded data using a matrix in

Microsoft Word.

Reflective Journal

I maintained a reflective journal of my experiences during this study to assist in creating transparency in the research process. Reflective journals identify the researcher's feelings and reflections in the midst of the research being conducted (Yin, 2011). I was able to identify changes I experienced throughout this process regarding beliefs, additional questions, and other issues. As a result, I was able to address issues I had not originally considered.

Ethical Considerations

There was a potential for ISS facilitators to feel like they must answer all interview questions positively since they were employed by the school system. Although it is important to conduct research that reveals how participants perceive their roles or tasks in an organization (Merriam, 1995), facilitators might believe they will experience repercussions if answers provided are interpreted as negative. These negative repercussions could include termination of employment, bullying, and other types of mistreatment.

I addressed this potential issue by taking additional precautions to ensure confidentiality was always maintained. I allowed facilitators to select a pseudonym to be used during interviews. I also used pseudonyms when reporting findings in any manner. In addition to using pseudonyms for facilitators, administrators, teachers, and staff members who were referenced during interviews were given pseudonyms as well. Finally, although I collected demographic information that could potentially lead to identification of an individual, I did not report the information in a way that could link an individual to his or her data.

Validity and Trustworthiness

To address the validity and trustworthiness of this study, I utilized methods triangulation (Denzin, 1978) and member checking (Cresswell & Miller, 2002). In addition to conducting interviews, triangulation was established in the following ways: examination of previous research to frame findings, accessing archival data, and comparing all data with the reflective journal maintained throughout the study. Normally, observations occur in triangulation. However, in this study, doing so would have potentially created ethical issues in terms of identifying students under the age of 18. They are considered to be a vulnerable population so, the risks did not outweigh the benefits for this specific study.

Member checking provides feedback from participants regarding the accuracy of analysis (Creswell & Miller, 2002). Member checking occurred during the interviews in the form of restated responses. In addition, a copy of individual transcripts was sent to each participant for verification purposes.

Positionality

I acknowledge my personal beliefs influence my objectivity in certain situations and I recognize the subjectivity of my interpretations in this study (Glesne, 2006). Specifically, I acknowledge my identity. I am an African American, working-class, mother who previously worked as an ISS facilitator for five years. In the following sections, I will explain these aspects of my identity and how they potentially impact this study.

Race

Having grown up in the Southern United States, I am well acquainted with the idea of being judged and treated based solely on my race. However, I considered my work experience

as an ISS facilitator and race was never an issue. Multiple races were represented in my previous

ISS program.

Class/ Number of Children

While I am currently a member of the working class, I grew up in an upper-middle class family. Growing up having all of my needs met, and more, is not the situation for many of the students I worked with in ISS. However, I am able to relate to some of the issues the students face for, as an adult, I have been a divorced, single parent of one child and I have had very little means to provide. I attended private schools K-8 and when I entered the public school system, I was ahead of my classmates, academically. By contrast, my daughter has always been a student of public schools and she has missed out on a lot of academic opportunities I had in primary school. Therefore, my position in both socio-economic classes leads me to believe that most parents and students do want the best education for their children even though all students are not receiving it.

ISS Facilitator

I started working in ISS as a result of needing to help my daughter with her schoolwork while she was transitioning to 6th grade. At the time, I was also a full-time student. I found that I was spending a lot of time helping her which left very little time for me to work on my own. The ISS position started out as simply a job. However, I became very interested in the success of the students I served. Soon, I was back in school and many of my courses were directly related to my job in some way. I started keeping a journal of my work experiences, recording events that took place. Then, I started looking for ways to address issues our group experienced.

I believe my job became my passion. Today, even though I have not worked with students in this capacity for four years, I am still very much interested in identifying issues that need to be resolved in order to make ISS more successful.

My Positionality and the Study

I believe my own experiences and beliefs regarding race, class/number of children, and previous occupation as an ISS facilitator impacted my subjectivity with regard to this study. However, I believe these aspects of my identity enhanced this study, as the allowed me to develop new questions by reflecting upon my own assumptions (Hatch, 2002).

Organization of the Study

This chapter included a discussion outlining the methodology I used throughout the study. In Chapter Four, I will provide a discussion of the major findings. This includes a detailed description of my participants' perspectives of the ISS program overall and as it relates to implementation and effectiveness.

CHAPTER 4
Analysis and Findings

The purpose of this study was to determine In-School Suspension (ISS) facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. As outlined in Chapter Three, a basic qualitative research design was utilized. Qualitative research attempts to understand issues from the participants' perspective (Merriam, 2002). Data analysis followed a general inductive approach. A general inductive approach utilizes detailed readings of data to establish concepts and themes that allow research findings to emerge (Thomas, 2006). The primary source of data was six interviews with high school ISS facilitators, both male and female. This chapter begins with participant profiles. Next, the major themes and sub-themes are presented and discussed.

Research Questions

This study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How do ISS facilitators perceive their role in the implementation of ISS?

2. How do ISS facilitators perceive the effectiveness of ISS as a disciplinary referral program for students assigned to the program?

3. What suggestions do ISS facilitators have for improving the ISS program?

Participant Profiles

Participants for this study consisted of six high school ISS facilitators from a public school district in the southeast region of the United States. Each participant began working in ISS for different reasons. They also all had different experiences related to administrative support and working with students. Transcripts and notes from interviews were used to create participant

profiles. I emphasized to each participant that I would make sure his or her identity would not be made known. Therefore, pseudonyms have been used when describing each participant.

I spoke to each participant for 30-45 minutes prior to each interview. This time was designated to establish rapport and allowed time for me to learn more about them. At the same time, I had the opportunity to look around each facilitator's ISS room. I found this to be extremely important as well. Researchers have suggested that aesthetically pleasing spaces play a role in how students interpret their environments. I captured certain aspects of our meetings prior to the interview in my reflective journal and included notes from my journal in the participant profiles. Sharing this information provided additional insight into my interpretations of the data.

Table 1. Participant Profiles

Name	**Experience**	**Received Training Yes/No**
Mary	10 plus years	No
Aida	10 plus years	No
Phil	3 years	No
Roxy	5 years	No
Barry	10 plus years	No
Jarecia	10 plus years	No

Mary

Mary's ISS room was filled with interesting items such as musical instruments, art, and books. Prior to our interview, I noticed that she had many engaging items in her room. It was obvious that some time had been invested in coordinating the room. I wondered if the students even understood some of the art pieces that were in there. I also wondered if any of them played an instrument. It is well documented that early exposure to the arts results in higher academic achievement, assists at-risk youth with staying in school, and better prepares students for the work force as employers seek creative thinkers. Mary mentioned that a student did ask to play one of her instruments in exchange for discontinuing his disruptive behavior. She did not allow the student to play the instrument. Instead, she told him that if he could stop the behavior in order to play the instrument, he could stop with no reward as well.

Mary is a middle-aged Caucasian woman who has worked in ISS for over 10 years. She has worked in the same school the entire time she has been an ISS facilitator. The program at Mary's school is large (15-20 students per day). Mary works with a mix of African American, Caucasian, and English Language Learner students. Mary did not receive any training for her position. Through trial and error, she has developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. She believes her school administration is extremely supportive of the ISS program. Mary chose to work in ISS as a facilitator because she believes she is able to make a difference with the students she serves.

Mary's work style in ISS mostly aligned with the punitive model. Her goal for ISS included maintaining a quiet workplace at all times. Mary helped students with their work at

times. However, that is only a portion of the guidelines required for the academic model. The academic model requires actively engaging with the student in order to evaluate academic needs. Doing so will help students' academic performance. And, likewise, better academic performance will result in improved behavior in the regular classroom (Morris & Howard, 2003). Mary mentioned having a teaching degree. Therefore, she is qualified to perform the various assessments. At the same time, Mary was very clear about what she was and was not required to do as an ISS facilitator. She indicated helping students with their school work was not part of her job description.

Aida

Aida's room was extremely neat, inviting, and well-decorated. She had taken the time to paint her room and had plenty of plants. I only stood at her door for a brief moment as we actually interviewed in a conference room.

Aida is a middle-aged Caucasian woman who has worked in ISS for over 10 years. She has worked in the same school the entire time she has been an ISS facilitator. The program at Aida's school is large (15-20 students per day). Aida mainly works with Caucasian students. However, occasionally, African American students are assigned to ISS. Aida did not receive any training for her position. Through trial and error, she also developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. She believes her school administration is extremely supportive of the ISS program and her efforts. Aida was asked to work in ISS and that is how she began her career as a facilitator.

Aida borrowed mostly from the punitive model in her role as ISS facilitator. Aida maintained structure in ISS at all times. However, when talking with Aida, it was clear that she had made some observations regarding external issues students were faced with that ultimately impact their behavior at school. This type of thinking aligns well with the therapeutic model that recognizes students are dealing with problems which impact their behavior (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). In order for this model to be effectively be implemented, other stakeholders would have to actively participate in the ISS program. At the time of the study, Aida was the only person involved in the program.

Phil

Phil's room was not decorated at all. There was not anything in the room that stood out to me. Phil was pleasant but didn't talk too much.

Phil is a middle-aged Caucasian man who has worked in ISS for less than five years. He has worked in the same school the entire time he has been an ISS facilitator. The program at Phil's school is medium (averages 14 students per day). Phil works with mostly Caucasian students. However, some African American students are occasionally assigned to ISS. In addition, Phil did not receive any training for his position. Through trial and error and the help of fellow ISS facilitators, he has developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. He believes his school administration is extremely supportive of the ISS program. Phil chose to work in ISS as a facilitator because he was looking for a second career and some friends suggested he apply.

Phil's philosophy for the ISS program was mostly aligned with the punitive model. He did mention helping students with their work at times. However, for the academic model to be effective, an evaluation needs to take place to determine students' academic needs.

Roxy

Roxy's workspace was very small. It seemed dark in color and cluttered. Although she had various items in her room, nothing stood out to me.

Roxy is a middle-aged Caucasian woman who has worked in ISS for less than five years. Roxy has worked in the same school the entire time she has been an ISS facilitator. The program at Roxy's school is small (averaging 1 student per day). Roxy mainly sees Caucasian students. Roxy did not receive any training for her position. Her role as ISS facilitator is different than most in that she also serves as a school administrator. Roxy and the other school administrators have developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. She believes her school administration and Central Office administration are supportive of the ISS program. Roxy chose to work in ISS as the facilitator because a dedicated ISS program was not implemented at this school. Therefore, the alternative included administrators serving in the role of ISS facilitator.

Roxy made a positive impression on me mainly because she was well-informed regarding cultural competency. Roxy described an African American male student to be one who presented challenges. In her description, she did not perceive those challenges to be based on

race. Instead, she interpreted his issues to be a direct result of his family's socio-economic status. Roxy believed that living in poverty, as opposed to race, was at the root of these issues.

Roxy did not really implement any of the models. While she did acknowledge issues that could be directly linked to the need for all models in the ISS program, she incorporated more of an autonomous style for students assigned to ISS.

Barry

Barry's room was extremely clean and organized. He had a variety of posters on the wall. He also had workstations for his students.

Barry is a middle-aged African American male who has worked in ISS for over 10 years. He has worked in the same school the entire time he has been an ISS facilitator. The program at Barry's school is small (no more than six students per day). Barry works with a mix of African American, Caucasian, and English Language Learner students. In addition, Barry did not receive any training for his position. Through trial and error and research, he has developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. He believes the school administration is supportive of the ISS program. Barry chose to work in ISS as a facilitator because he feels he understands issues the students are facing and believes he is making a difference with those he serves.

For the most part, Barry philosophy seemed to be most aligned with the therapeutic model. He recognized that external factors were negatively impacting students' behavior. However, the therapeutic model calls for follow-up counseling that should be scheduled prior

students arrival to ISS (Harabak & Settles, 1990). These accommodations were not available to students at Barry's school.

Jarecia

Jarecia's room was not decorated at all. It was very dark in her room. There was nothing that stood out to me in this room.

Jarecia is a middle-aged African American woman who has worked in ISS for more than 10 years. She has worked in three different schools ever since she began working as an ISS facilitator. The program at Jarecia's school is large (15-20 students per day). Jarecia works with mostly African American students. In addition, Jarecia did not receive any training for her position. Through trial and error, she has developed strategies to implement while working with students who have been assigned to ISS. She believes her school administration is extremely supportive of the ISS program. Jarecia chose to work in ISS as a facilitator because she was in need of a job and she knew that she would work well with this population of students.

During our conversation, Jarecia mentioned that she tells students that she loves them and pays attention to how they act in terms of what might be missing in their lives such as one parent or both parents. These comments stood out to me. Also, the fact that Jarecia has worked in three different schools could be alarming to some. However, having worked in a public school system, I know that it is common to move around often. Administrators are moved around to utilize their strengths in a failing school, as a demotion of sorts, and as a promotion. As it relates to certified teachers, the reasons given for moving around include low performance and not

being liked very well. In general, certified employees have tenure which provides protection from being terminated in many instances. However, that is not true for non-certified staff such as Jarecia. Often, non-certified staff is not given any warnings or chances to improve their work. Jarecia mentioned there was a request for her to move to different schools. This was more than likely so she could be of benefit to the ISS program. ISS has a high turnover rate and there are some schools that have a reputation for having extreme behavioral management issues. Jarecia's work experience included such schools.

Jarecia's style aligned mostly with the punitive model. At the same time, she did make observations that would align with the therapeutic model. Again, this was not a service her school provided to students.

Thematic Analysis

My findings are based on the general inductive approach utilized through analyzing data from six participant interviews and a reflective journal I maintained throughout the study. The general inductive approach suggests three to eight summary categories. In addition, these categories should be significant themes based on the research objectives (Thomas, 2006). I established themes by asking questions about the facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. In keeping with the primary research objectives, I specifically sought to learn more about the facilitator's experiences related to students assigned to ISS and ways the program could be more effective.

General View of ISS

Overall, the facilitators believed the ISS program was in place to accommodate students who violated the school rules. The following quotations detail this believe more fully:

Mary: ISS is a place where students go when they have been written up by their teachers for various reasons.

Aida: ISS is a place for students who would normally be suspended from school.

Barry: ISS involves housing students who have broken various rules and violations.

Jarecia: ISS is for kids that have so many infractions or have been put out of class.

Each participant shared unique perspectives on their experiences while working in the ISS program. Examples included how they described relationships with students, professional development and room for improvement within the ISS program, and perceptions of American male students. I intended to learn more about African American male students in the ISS program given the statistics I found on disproportionate assignments; however, participants talked more about ISS in general. Therefore most themes were derived from general comments. I have noted differences as they occurred.

The following themes emerged as being significant: 1) facilitator roles, 2) administrator expectations and support, 3) reasons students are assigned to ISS, 4) ISS daily schedule, 5) effectiveness of ISS, 6) relationship with students, 7) professional development, and 8) room for improvement. Table 1 illustrates how each theme interrelated.

Theme One: Facilitator Roles

Participants held different views regarding how they defined their role as an ISS facilitator. Among these were making sure students were prepared to return to class, providing rules and leaving it up to the students to decide how to move forward, making sure students completed course assignments, and helping students with their coursework.

All participants believed their roles included providing a quiet environment for students to work. All participants believed it was equally important for facilitators to behave in a strict and consistent manner at all times. Overall, "strict and consistent" was defined similarly among participants. Meaning, all facilitators implemented and maintained one set of rules in ISS. With the exception of Jarecia, all participants enforced assigned seating. Mary and Aida agreed that the students could not use cellphones during their ISS assignment. However, Mary's interpretation of this rule involved taking and locking students' cell phones up while Aida simply advised students to turn off their cell phones and warned that phones would be confiscated if students used them.

Mary and Aida instructed students to work quietly throughout the day and did not allow talking during lunch. This was slightly different from Phil's rule regarding talking. Phil's ISS students had to remain quiet throughout the day with the exception of lunch, when according to him, "They get to talk and get it all out of their system." Roxy shared this sentiment as well; however, her ISS program usually only served one student per day. Roxy did allow students assigned to ISS to choose the lunch period they wanted to eat. She said, ". . . we are not going to make them wait if they are hungry. We let them eat with whoever they want to eat with."

Barry similarly exhibited a level of leniency during the lunch period. Students were

allowed to talk to their friends. In contrast to Roxy's rules, Barry's students only got to choose a specific lunch period if they had made good choices and followed other ISS rules throughout the day. Barry said, "Lunch is dependent on if we are all working – we will go early or we will go late."

Sub theme 1: Get Back to Class

Some participants interviewed believed it was their job to implement the rules of ISS and to help students adjust their thinking such that they would not return to ISS. These measures were implemented through punitive and rehabilitative strategies. For Aida, it was important for students to be able to leave ISS and behave better in the classroom. Aida made references to students coming to ISS and deciding to never return. She explained, "My role is to make sure that when I see you come in ISS, it is the last time I see you in here. I only want to see you in the hall. That is where I want to see you."

Likewise, Jarecia ultimately wanted the students to be in the regular classroom as well. At the same time, she wanted students to understand the reason they were assigned to ISS. She said, My role involves talking the student back to reality in terms of their behavior. I try not to talk about the details of what they did. I just say try to correct what you did so you won't have to come back and visit. I would prefer that they be in their classroom but my job is to take in the students assigned to ISS so you have to come and visit me.

Sub theme 2: Help with Coursework

Phil made clear he was willing to help students with their coursework. He said,

> My role in ISS is to make sure my rules are followed. Make sure the students come to ISS. My role is to also make sure they have assignments from their teachers. If they need help, I will help them out as much as possible.

While participants believed it was not their responsibility to assist students with school assignments, they often did. In addition, they helped students understand how to manage their behavioral issues. When asked to describe her role in ISS, Mary elaborated:

> People ask me what my job is. My job is not necessarily to teach individual classes even though I have a degree. My role is not to teach them math or science even though I am capable and sometimes I do take on that role. My job is to teach these kids to make better decisions. My role is to bring to the forefront what your behavior was, why you are in here and what's it going to take for you to mend your behavior so you don't have to come back. That's my role as facilitator. I try to teach these kids to make better decisions.

During the interview with Barry, he indicated that his role in ISS was similar to a parent's role. As a result, he wanted to make sure students returned to the classroom with improved behavior and completed work. He said,

> It's just an extension of a surrogate parent. We hold students accountable the way most parents should, just the same as teachers do. It's an extension of parental guidance over maturing adolescents that just come out of puberty that don't know exactly what it is they should and shouldn't do according to the social situation. My role is to assist as much as

possible in making sure students return to the regular classroom having completed missed work and make-up work.

Facilitators believed it was important for all students to complete their coursework. It was also understood that being assigned to ISS provided a block of time that could be utilized to catch up on work. Ultimately, the completion of coursework seemed to be an important, easily obtainable goal for all facilitators to accomplish.

Theme Two: Administrator Expectations and Support

All participants indicated their administration believed ISS was operating in a productive manner. Therefore, expectations from the administration were aligned with facilitator behaviors already in place. Overall, most participants felt supported. Participants knew that if an issue arose that required assistance from the administration, all the needed support would be provided. The expectations and support were perceived as fair and strong. Mary expressed confidence in her administration. She said,

The administration knows that I am going to do my job and I know that the administration is there to help me out if I'm not being effective. I do have such a great administrative staff. I don't feel like I am pressured to do things that I am uncomfortable with. I have never sent anyone out of here and felt like it wasn't being dealt with. Now, occasionally, they will read them the riot act and they will send them back to me. And more than likely, that works beautifully. They just needed an attitude adjustment. Aida similarly believed the level of support received from her administrators to be high. She said,

Well, they expect me – they know that if there's any way possible, I'm going to handle it without ever calling them. And they expect me to make that student do all his

assignments, too. You cannot have a program like this if a student gets written-up and they go in the office and the administrator doesn't do anything about it. These kids talk. You are going to start the biggest mess ever. I have seen it. I have back up. That's what it takes to run ISS properly.

Phil believed the way he ran ISS was also aligned with the expectations of the administration. He explained, "I think they expect me to run it the way I do. I have never seen an instance where I had to send a student down and they didn't have my back."

Barry also believed his administration was supportive and that the expectation was that students would be doing their work. He said,

The principals expect me to make sure the kids are doing the work that teachers send them. On a scale from 1-10, I would give the administration a nine. If I gave a 10, that would mean they were perfect. It's a nine.

Jarecia indicated that her administration was very supportive. She said they are happy to assist with students when needed and described their feelings toward the ISS program by saying, "They love it!'

Roxy indicated that there was an issue regarding the support received for the ISS program. She said,

I am questioned about it all the time. They (students) are not repeating it so it must be working. And the majors are stopping. I think the effectiveness of our program is surprising to most. It is not 100% mostly, I think because they don't understand it. For the most part, the facilitators were confident, eager, and happy when sharing information regarding their administration. In addition, their eyes lit up as they spoke of support. They believed their ISS

programs were working well as a result of having a supportive administration. It was clear that mutual respect existed between the facilitators and the administration.

Theme Three: Reasons Students are Assigned to ISS

Most facilitators indicated insubordination was the main reason students are assigned to ISS. In addition, half of the participants mentioned cell phone violations/technology and tardiness as infractions that resulted in ISS assignment. Two participants mentioned skipping class as a reason and, one participant mentioned dress code violations and fighting. Mary described the main reasons she saw students in ISS,

> Probably insubordination. And that covers many things. That could be cursing at a teacher, that could be yelling at the teacher, that could be refusing to work. Anything that is-that could be refusing to give up their cell phone if they've been caught using it in class. So, insubordination is probably my first. That's the largest followed by cell phone – inappropriate cell phone use, probably followed closely by inappropriate use of the computer.
>
> Playing games in the classroom, tardies - more than five tardies to a class is in there.
>
> Profanity toward a teacher or just in the classroom. A lot of that falls under class disruption.
>
> Those are probably the most common.

Aida also mentioned cell phone violations and class disturbances as issues that resulted in being assigned to ISS. She noted,

> Cell phones. You will have these class disturbance students who do it for attention. They are not making the credits. They will lay out for three-four days then they will return to school. The behavior is worse than ever. There is a lot of that.

Phil mentioned most of the same issues as Mary and Aida. However, he also mentioned tardiness, skipping class, altercations with students, and insubordination to teachers as behaviors that result in being assigned to ISS. Roxy also cited abuse of technology, tardiness, and insubordination as infractions that warrant being assigned to ISS. Barry provided different infractions that included dress code violations and sleeping in class. Jarecia mentioned students skipping class and insubordination as issues that resulted in students being assigned to ISS as well.

When the facilitators mentioned the various infractions that resulted in students being assigned to ISS, I noticed that most facilitators seem to express a feeling of indifference regarding the violations. For instance, some facilitators did not display any facial expressions. Others shrugged their shoulders.

Theme Four: Daily ISS Schedule

Overall, the facilitators' followed the same schedule. First thing in the morning, they all distributed assignments and/or made sure teachers provided students with assignments. Mary indicated, "I ask them if they have their assignments. If they don't have assignments, I will then call individual teachers to get assignments." Phil had his students' assignments ready for them upon arrival to ISS. He said, "You come in. I already have your assignment. As soon as I get the call (about their assignment to ISS), I'm going to call your teachers. I gather all that as soon as I get to school so I know what I have to work with." There was no talking allowed in the ISS classroom and students work all day. Regarding not working while assigned to ISS, Aida said, "Now, let me see you sitting there staring in the air wasting time, that would not be good."

With the exception of Aida's students, all students were escorted while on their bathroom breaks. When Roxy was asked if the students were escorted to the bathroom, she said, "Yes, everything is on camera." With the exception of Barry's ISS program, all facilitators had isolated lunch periods. He noted, "When we do go to lunch, they do get to see their classmates." In addition, as mentioned previously, immediately following lunch, Barry incorporated a social skills component the ISS schedule. In the past, Mary also attempted to implement an activity at the end of the day involving students sharing about their infraction. Mary said,

> I would say, what was your infraction? What could you do to make a better decision the next time? And really, it was kind of counterproductive. Because it just became a brag session . . . And you know, I just kind of started finding it counterproductive as opposed to being a learning session, it was a brag session. So, I cut those short. I just decided that, that was not meeting the ends that I wanted it to.

All facilitators also collected completed assignments and returned the work to teachers.

Facilitators were able to establish schedules they believed served the ISS program best. Overall, the schedules facilitators implemented were consistent. No one mentioned ever deviating from the schedule. And, there was no mention of students creating issues as a result of the scheduling in place.

Theme Five: ISS as a Safe and Effective Place

The facilitators provided reasons for why they believed the program benefitted students assigned to ISS. They also discussed advantages experienced by students and teachers who remained in the regular classroom where students had been removed to serve time in ISS. Some

ways in which facilitators believed the program was advantageous included keeping students in school as opposed to being suspended out of school, helping classroom teachers teach without the disruptive students interfering with that process, and allowing students to learn in the absence of the student who was assigned to ISS. Participants believed students who were assigned to ISS also benefited because they had quiet, uninterrupted time to complete assignments. Furthermore, they felt ISS kept students away from negative behaviors such as bullying in the classroom and inappropriate parental behavior at home. Meaning, it was safer to have some of the assigned students at school as opposed to being at home in an unsafe environment.

The advantages of being assigned to ISS can be viewed as a supportive system that assists students in ISS academically, emotionally, and physically. Mary believed having students in ISS gave them an opportunity to get caught up on work even if their behavior did not change. She noted,

> Hopefully, the student's misbehavior is curtailed and they will not return to ISS. But if that is not the case, at least it gives them the opportunity to get caught up on-to catch up on make-up work. Being down here for eight hours, you would be amazed at the amount of work they can turn out. Some kids come down here and say, 'I passed third block. I was failing and now I am passing third block because I was able to catch up on everything.'

Aida indicated ISS was effective because it assists the teacher in being able to teach other children. She said,

> The classroom teacher is getting her major problem out of her classroom so she can teach. And the kids do not have any disturbances in there. When you get done with

> assignments and you have make-up work-and a lot of students do from classes- you get the make-up work done, you're bringing your grade up. I make them do that.

Phil similarly indicated that he would like students to get caught up on work while assigned to ISS. He remarked, "If they take advantage of it, they can catch up on their work. They have computers that they can do their work on. I don't mind if they work on it all day as long as they work."

Roxy provided a slightly different view regarding advantages of being assigned to ISS. She shared that it was important for her to identify exactly what students assigned to ISS needed to move forward academically. In addition, she recognized the benefit that students receive in the regular classroom when those assigned to ISS are removed. Roxy also noted that keeping a student at school opposed to being at home where the environment is malproductive was a benefit. She said,

> ISS has the potential to help teachers personalize learning for students. If I have a student in there, I can put together a set of assignments for him or her to help them where they are. And, I can be reasonably sure that somebody is going to stand over them and make them do it. It is also an advantage to other students in the class because the kids who are in ISS are usually the ones teachers are taking their time to ask to stop talking, get back on task, whatever. It's a class period for the rest of them. I have one in particular that I would not want to be sent home for anything. That student's home situation is so bad. I would feel uncomfortable knowing our school sent him into harm's way.

Barry shared similar views and added that ISS is also a place for students to come that is safe. However, he believed ISS keeps students safe from each other as opposed to the home environment. He mentioned,

> It's quiet. You don't have all the teasing, taunting, you don't have the gossip, you don't have the language, or the different sets [gangs] picking at each other because I don't allow it. They get away from whatever set them off – teacher or student. They also are so distracted in their classroom which makes completing work difficult. They are able to do their work in here.

Finally, Jarecia shared the same sentiment regarding students being able to get away from issues that are bothersome to them. Jarecia's intuition helped in these types of situations as well. She said, "If a child is having a bad day and that teacher has tried and the teacher put them out, that student will get a break. Students being in ISS also give teachers a break."

All facilitators seemed to be very happy to be able to give the students an alternative place to come when situations did not turn out well in the classroom. They all viewed time in ISS as a way to get school work done and as a way to regroup after being upset. Even though some students did not take advantage of this option, all facilitators seemed to be happy it was available for those who were interested.

Theme Six: Relationship with Students

All participants believed they had healthy, positive relationships with students assigned to ISS. However, all also agreed facilitators cannot be friends with students. They described the need to keep the relationship professional and strict.

At the same time, each participant told stories of personal conversations they had with students assigned to ISS. Two participants mentioned not liking to see the students hungry. Mary provided very clear information regarding her relationship with students. She elaborated, It's pretty militaristic. You know, for the most part, I'm a disciplinarian. We will have discussions. Occasionally, on better behavior, on what they can do to achieve that, what they can do to not be sent back to ISS. But for the most part, it's disciplinarian. You know, that's why they're here. They're not here to have a good time. They're not here to be patted on the back. They are here to be- pay the repercussions for misbehavior.

Aida shared similar comments. She said,

> It has to be very professional because they already know they're in trouble and you have the good ones with the bad ones. So, you have to be strict and professional all the way through. And I know what's best for them. If I see you doing something you should not be doing, were going outside in the hall and I will tell you I expect more than that. Most of the time, I get results.

Aida went on to describe how passionate she felt regarding restricting food items from students assigned to ISS. She explained,

> I have stood up to take up for these people. Other ISS instructors would say, "I don't allow mine to get chocolate milk and cookies." Those kids-the majority of them sell the food stamps for drugs, whiskey, and beer. They will never tell you this. And, I stood up at a major meeting – when I leave this world, I have a higher power to answer to, I have children of my own. I will not let a kid go hungry. I will not take food from them. They turned that all the way around. It's not right. They'll tell you that's the only food they get

> because all their stuff is being sold. You don't play with that. There is a stopping point with that.

Phil and Roxy believed they had developed positive relationships with students for the most part as well. Jarecia also believed she had a good relationship with the students. She believed the good relationships that have been established with students are based on mutual respect they have for each other.

Barry added a different perspective by saying that his relationship with the students is more personal. He shared,

> I grew up in the community knowing their parents. I tell them stories, their parents verify it and they come back to school the kids look at me a little differently. They have new respect for me. Some relationships are relatives down the line. I have seen that. Some relationships are my neighbors because I live where they live. I live in the city. That's my relationship. It's personal sometimes. It's great. It's great.

Participants expressed having healthy relationships with students assigned to ISS. However, facilitators believed a balance should be established that involves keeping the relationship professional and strict while still letting students know they care. For the most part, facilitators were maintaining a healthy balance.

Theme Seven: Professional Development

All participants shared that they were unaware of any professional development opportunities available that focused specifically on ISS. In addition, everyone believed there was a need to have training available to ISS facilitators. While some believed professional

development opportunities were important for those new to the ISS program, others believed it would benefit everyone. Still others believed training was completely unnecessary.

Sub theme 1: It's a Must for New ISS Facilitators

Mary did not believe the lack of professional training opportunities negatively impacted her. However, she thought that professional development opportunities should be available to new ISS facilitators. She explained,

> Within the last two years, I guess there has been no training whatsoever. There is no training. I don't know how a new teacher coming into it would figure out how to fulfill those roles and expectations and any guidelines unless they came into an already established program.

Aida also believed professional development opportunities should be offered to new ISS facilitators. She spoke about a physical altercation that involved a student and an ISS facilitator. She believed this altercation was a direct result of not having training. She recalled,

> They have absolutely nothing. You see? And, you know what happened at East High School? I could see how that guy [facilitator] got backed up against the wall and got frustrated. You know, how much training had they guy had? It's an eye-opener, it really is. So, having training would be absolutely wonderful. It really would be.

Sub theme 2: The Need for Additional Training

Phil indicated that even though there were no professional development training opportunities specifically for ISS facilitators, he would like to participate in these type of activities. He said,

There are no professional development opportunities geared specifically toward ISS. I would like for once or twice a year to have ISS teachers come together and talk and learn from others do in ISS so we can help each other and find out what works and what does not work. I believe more cooperation from the teachers would be beneficial as well. Aida also indicated that once upon a time, workshops were provided for ISS facilitators. She loved participating in these events and she would love to do so again. Roxy and Barry mentioned available training opportunities to assist with safely restraining students when the situation becomes physical. Barry thought that type of training would be enough. However, Roxy explained that someone in her school researches ISS and they are looking at different strategies (in house) to implement that will likely improve the program. Jarecia could not recall any training opportunities that had been available to ISS facilitators and did not see the need for training for this specific group.

Sub theme 3: No Need for Training

Mary believed she couldn't benefit from any training. At the same time, Aida believed she could benefit from the training even though she has worked in this position longer than Mary. Also, I found it interesting that Jarecia didn't believe there was the need for training at all. This was another instance where I perceived Jarecia to express indifference regarding issues related to the ISS program. She did not hesitate to tell me there was no need for training.

Some facilitators believed professional development training would be beneficial for everyone. However, others were content with the type of overall training available for all staff members. This type of training did not address issues specific to the ISS program. In addition, some facilitators did not believe training on any level was necessary.

Theme Eight: Room for Improvement

Participants suggested the following improvements for the ISS program: more parental involvement, teachers sending work for students to complete, providing a reflective component, and providing some type of mentorship for the students assigned to ISS.

Mary, Aida, and Barry believed more parental involvement would be helpful. They noted parents are absent due to alcohol and drug addictions. Many parents are in jail/prison and the grandparents are raising the children. The facilitators believed these issues were contributing to student misbehavior and ultimately being assigned to ISS.

Phil believed that the program could be improved greatly if all teachers would provide assignments for students to complete while in ISS. All other facilitators mentioned teachers not providing work. However, they did not indicate that having teachers send assignments would improve the program. Instead, they believed students should be provided with books and magazines to read and other forms of busy work while in ISS.

Roxy had a different idea about improving the program. She pointed out,

> Aside from doing their make-up work, they need to actually reflect on what got them there. And how do I do it differently. Maybe having an exit ticket out of ISS where they write about what they did to get into ISS and this is what I will do differently next time if the situation ever arises. We should have an exit ticket to make ISS better.

Jarecia believed having a mentorship program available to students would be beneficial to the students. She indicated that she would be willing to assist with the creation and operation of such a program. In addition, Jarecia believed establishing a more structured ISS program would be an improvement.

All facilitators were eager to share ideas regarding improving ISS. Some seemed to be frustrated by the lack of involvement from parents and teachers. Others simply seemed to believe their ideas would yield positive changes.

Organization of the Study

This chapter provided a discussion of the major findings of the study. This included a detailed description of my participants' perspectives of the ISS program presented in eight themes. Chapter Five offers the conclusions of the study based on the findings as well as a discussion of implications, recommendations for practice, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine In-School Suspension (ISS) facilitators' role(s) in ISS implementation and effectiveness. When reviewing the literature, I examined various disciplinary practices in American Schools, out-of-school suspension/zero tolerance policies, and outcomes for students suspended from school. Also, I integrated some first-hand knowledge of the above-referenced issues, as I was an ISS facilitator for five years. During this time, I became familiar with the standard practices in place regarding school discipline. I found these practices to be malproductive and not in the best interest of the student. A significant issue that stood out to me involved students repeatedly being written up in the classroom, going straight to the office, and ultimately, being assigned to ISS. Many students who attended ISS were eventually suspended out of school and expelled. Most of these students dropped out. I became concerned with this situation. I discovered that no one really communicated with the facilitator. The facilitator spends the most amount of time with students assigned to ISS. I realized that I held a lot of beneficial knowledge as an ISS facilitator. These revelations, along with course information I learned while earning a master's degree in Educational Psychology, led me to begin researching role of facilitators in implementation and effectiveness of in-school suspension for students. This was the main idea of Chapter One.

Along with the above-referenced disciplinary topics, in Chapter Two, I reviewed the relevant literature, which included the following: ISS models, information on designing effective ISS programs, and the effectiveness of ISS programs. Along with that, I reviewed literature exploring the role of ISS facilitators and teacher perspectives on school discipline.

Chapter Three detailed the methodology utilized and steps taken to collect and analyze the data for this study.

In Chapter Four, I discussed findings of the study from the perspectives of ISS facilitators and presented through a thematic analysis. This final chapter includes a summary of findings, interpretation of findings, context of the findings, other comparisons to prior research, implications of the findings, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Six ISS facilitators contributed perspectives to this study. While four facilitators worked in the ISS program over 10 years, two facilitators had worked in the program for under five years. In addition, most had worked in the same school for the entire time. Four facilitators were Caucasian, two were African American, and two were male.

The findings of this study reflect facilitators' perceptions regarding their roles, effectiveness, and the need for improvement in the ISS program. Overall, the facilitators expressed a feeling of contentment in their positions. They each believed in consistency in terms of interacting with students assigned to ISS. While previous research suggested disparities in suspension rates for African American males, none of these facilitators believed there was a disciplinary issue specific to African American males in their schools. Based on the literature, I did not expect this to be the case. Instead, the participants believed assignment to ISS was based on dysfunctional issues taking place in the home, lack of parental involvement, and other external factors. Facilitators discussed a range of issues from their role and daily routine to the need for professional development.

The findings of this study have the potential to lead to changes in the way educators and other stakeholders understand the purpose of ISS programs. Ultimately, school systems can potentially improve suspension rates which could result in less students being expelled and dropping out of school.

Context of Findings

Eight themes that emerged in this study. Below, I briefly summarize the themes and contextualize these findings within the existing literature.

Facilitator Roles

Participants perceived their roles to include providing a quiet place for students to work. They also believed in maintaining consistent rules during ISS. This belief aligns with Gootman (1978) who advised that facilitators should remain steadfast in their firmness regarding expectations. The facilitators' beliefs regarding the benefits of being assigned to ISS varied. For some, the benefit included helping students understand how to correct their behavior in order to successfully return to their classroom. This belief was also reflected in the literature. Mizell (1978) believed ISS facilitators should emphasize assisting students with identifying and resolving the fundamental problems that contributing to their ISS assignment. Others believed it was a way to punish students and, at the same time, help them complete coursework. Often, the coursework was assignments students had previously failed to complete in the classroom. So, being able to complete assignments in ISS allowed many students to pass courses they would have otherwise failed. The way that facilitators defined their role regarding completing coursework also aligns with Hrabak and Settles (1990) belief that the most effective ISS programs involved students completing assignments. One participant in this study believed that

the role of ISS facilitator should allow for students to be autonomous. Meaning, the student should be left to follow through with the expectations of ISS. Likewise, Haley and Watson (2000) pointed out that ISS facilitators should lead students to reach their own conclusions regarding their behavior.

Administrator Expectations and Support

Overall, facilitators indicated their administration believed ISS was operating in a productive manner. Expectations from the administration were aligned with facilitator behaviors in place as well. Participants also reported receiving fair and strong support from their administration. Facilitators understood this type of support was crucial in order for the ISS program to be successful. The literature did not include information regarding administrator expectations and support. The support facilitators described mainly involved reinforcing the rules of ISS. For instance, if a student chose to go against the established rules of ISS and was consequently sent to the office, it was important for the administration to follow through with additional disciplinary action. Otherwise, some students would take advantage of the lack of shared vision between the facilitator and the administration. Support also involved regular communication between the ISS facilitator and the administration. Sometimes, this communication was as simple as a brief conversation before school began. During this time, the administration also shared concerns and asked questions. These actions helped make the program a success and contributed to the overall sense that facilitators were supported by their administration.

I experienced working in a program where the administration supported ISS and I worked in the same program where a new administration did not support the program. The program with

support was productive and there was only a small rate of recidivism. However, that was not the case with the administration that provided no support. The students' behavior became worse each time there was no follow-up in the office to reprimand students for misbehavior. Eventually, the students had no respect for me, the facilitator, which made it extremely difficult to maintain the much-needed structure in the program.

Reasons Students are Assigned to ISS

Participants indicated insubordination as the main reason students were assigned to ISS. Conversely, in their qualitative study of behaviors resulting in ISS assignment, Constenbader and Markson (1994) found physical aggression was the most common violation. Other reasons participants in their study listed for ISS assignment included truancy, tardiness, and unexcused absences. This information aligns well with the other infractions identified in the current study, which included cellphone/technology violations, tardiness, skipping class, and dress code violations. These violations are similar to the violations that occurred when I was a facilitator as well. The only difference is that students received out-of-school suspension for physical aggression. Perhaps as time passed, the physical altercations have become worse and more frequent, which warranted out-of-school suspensions.

ISS Daily Schedule

Facilitators related that students were normally assigned to ISS for 1-3 days. Based on a study conducted by Constenbader and Markson (1994), most students were assigned to ISS for 1-4 days. Participants in this study had similar schedules in place for students assigned to ISS. This schedule included providing coursework from teachers for students to complete throughout the day. This requirement aligns with the literature indicating that students were required to

complete assignments their teachers sent (Constenbader & Markson, 1994; Johnston, 1987). With the exception of one ISS program, students ate lunch in isolation. This also was consistent with previous research (Johnston, 1987). However, Johnson did not include information about whether or not the students were allowed to talk to each other. Patterson (1985) believed students assigned to ISS should be isolated from other students and from each other as well as not be able to communicate with each other in any form. Short (1988) was in agreement with this idea as well. Previous research did not address other specific details of the ISS daily schedule such as taking bathroom breaks in the morning and afternoon, and collecting completed work prior to dismissal. In addition, there was no mention in the literature regarding facilitators adding components to the schedule as one facilitator did in this current study.

ISS as a Safe and Effective Place

Overall, participants in this study believed ISS was an effective program, contrasting Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, (2009) finding that ISS programs are considered to be "little more than holding tanks" (p. 10). Brown (2007) believed excluding students from the normal classroom setting was ineffective and negatively impacted their achievement. Mendez and Sanders (1981) also deemed ISS as ineffective for assigned students. Their study results revealed students assigned to ISS based on low attendance continued having low attendance. Almost half the students studied returned to ISS after their initial assignment. In addition, student assigned had significant high school dropout rates.

One reason facilitators in this study believed the ISS program was effective is because it kept students in school as opposed to being suspended out of school. They also believed ISS helped classroom teachers focus on teaching the students who were not being disruptive in class

who were there to learn. Participants indicated ISS also provided students who were assigned with quiet, uninterrupted time to complete assignments. At the same time, some participants perceived ISS to be a safe place for students who would otherwise be subjected to bullying behaviors from peers and inappropriate parental behavior at home.

None of the facilitators mentioned having a mission statement in place to help guide program's effectiveness. Vanderslice (1999) believed in the importance of establishing a mission statement that includes information regarding the program and its goals. Likewise, participants did not mention teamwork as a strategy that was implemented as it related to effectiveness in the ISS program. The ISS disciplinary cycle included teachers writing students up and students being assigned to ISS by administrators. Then, teachers provided work. There was no mention of any significant interaction with any other stakeholders. It is imperative that the development, implementation, and updates for ISS operational programs have contributions from all stakeholders (Harabak & Settles, 1990; Mizell, 1978; Sullivan, 1989). In addition to teamwork, the importance of individual facilitator skills and qualifications has been suggested in the literature. For instance, there should be a desire to work with academically and behaviorally troubled students, strong classroom management skills, proficiency in providing a positive atmosphere conducive to learning, and the ability to relate to students in an empathetic, respectful, and consistent manner (Sullivan, 1989). All of these skills and qualifications seemed present with the participants. However, other necessary skills and qualifications such as experience in counseling, social work, or special education, and a willingness to seek out a variety of appropriate resources and act as a referral agent when warranted (Sullivan, 1989) were not exhibited among most of the participants. Only two facilitators had a college education.

However, one only helped when she chose to do so as opposed to making sure students received help consistently.

The literature provided some final considerations that could directly impact the effectiveness of ISS. First, Mizell (1978) suggested the location of the ISS room should be away from high-traffic areas in the school. All of the ISS rooms I visited were located away from high-traffic areas. In addition, the ISS rooms I worked in were located far away as well. However, discussions took place regarding moving the ISS room to the office. This idea was presented as a strategy that could potentially help prevent students from further engaging in misbehavior while assigned to ISS. However, this information was not presented as a strategy derived from research or past experience. Mizell (1978) also indicated that the room should have instructional materials and not be as aesthetically pleasing as regular classrooms. This was the case for about half of the facilitators in the study.

Relationship with Students

All participants believed they had positive relationships with students assigned to ISS. This idea aligns well with the limited literature. Gootman (1998) advised that ISS facilitators should establish a personal relationship with students. Participants in the current study also indicated facilitators should not be friends with students. At the same time, participants shared acts of kindness toward the students they served. This included providing food to students who arrived to school hungry, being non-judgmental, and listening.

Professional Development

For the most part, participants believed professional development opportunities should be available to ISS facilitators. While some facilitators believed this training was more important

for new facilitators, most agreed it would benefit everyone. However, one facilitator believed professional development was not needed for facilitators who had been working in the program for a while. Current literature in the field does not specifically address professional development for ISS facilitators. However, Strong, Fletcher, and Villar (2004) mentioned professional development implementation as a key strategy utilized by teachers to improve student learning. This suggests the same may be true for ISS facilitators and student achievement which includes overcoming behavioral issues. As a previous ISS facilitator, my school system initially offered training opportunities; however, I don't recall the activities being directly related to ISS. For instance, one meeting involved facilitators receiving massages. While this was a great idea and much needed, it simply did not address the issues we were tackling each day in ISS.

Room for Improvement

Participants suggested more parental involvement as a way to improve the ISS program. Hrabak and Settles (1990) emphasized participation and teamwork from all stakeholders including parents. Also, participants mentioned the need for teachers to send work to students to complete while in ISS. The academic model for ISS recommends that students should receive an adequate substitution for classroom assignments (Morris & Howard, 2003). Added to that, researchers noted that the facilitator should be qualified to evaluate academic issues and teach skills among students assigned to ISS (Short, 1998). Unfortunately, there seems to be a mismatch limiting the implementation of this model. Troyan (2003) found few ISS facilitators certified to teach any subject area, which was similar to the educational backgrounds of this study's participants.

Participants also mentioned providing a reflective component for students in hopes that they would realize the importance of being more successful upon returning to the classroom. This idea aligns well with the research that suggests students assigned to ISS should receive some type of counseling that includes understanding the rule/s they violated and the reason/s they were assigned to ISS. In addition, students should acknowledge the problems they were experienced which resulting in their ISS assignment. This can assist students in reflecting on their behavior (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). The participants also mentioned mentoring students as an area that could be improved. While the research did not directly suggest mentoring as a way to improve the ISS program, the benefits of counseling (often include mentorship) were noted in the research. Hochman and Worner (1987) suggested that counseling students assigned to ISS assists students in adjusting their behavior.

Other Comparisons to Prior Research

The findings of this study have similarities and differences when compared to the literature that already exists in the field. Below, I will discuss the main areas that were emphasized by facilitators that could be compared to the literature.

ISS Models

Overall, the punitive model (Morris & Howard, 2003) was implemented among facilitators in this study. However, some facilitators attempted to address academic issues students experienced. Facilitators believed their program provided a place for students to complete coursework. As a result, facilitators believed this block of time assisted in students passing classes and ultimately graduating. This idea directly aligns with the literature, which suggests students assigned to ISS are able to stay current academically (Brown, 2007). However,

this study did not address the issues that arise when students are assigned to ISS and not on grade level. In order for success to be realized when implementing the academic model, a facilitator must be qualified to make the appropriate assessments and provide adequate assistance with school work. This model assumes the ISS facilitator is qualified to evaluate academic issues and teach needed skills among students assigned to ISS (Short, 1988). Unfortunately, most facilitators in the study were not qualified to participate in such a way.

Regarding the therapeutic model, counseling and following up with students after leaving ISS is a proposed solution to promote their successful return to the classroom, but needs to be in place prior to assignment (Hrabak & Settles, 1990). In addition, Hochman and Worner (1987) suggested that counseling students assigned to ISS is a necessary component in order for students to adjust their behavior. Some facilitators in this study were sensitive to external factors contributing to students' behavioral issues. However, in order for this model to be effective, additional stakeholders must participate in the process. These include administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and the community.

Effectiveness

Hrabak and Settles (1990) suggested ways effective ISS programs might operate; emphasizing the whole school community should work together including parents. This was not the case for ISS programs in the current study. Facilitators believed their school administrators were supportive of their programs. Meaning, they were in agreement with the discipline measures in place for students assigned to ISS and were willing to follow-up with additional disciplinary measures when the expectations were not met in ISS. However, while this type of support is crucial to the programs' success, the literature describes a more collaborative

interaction that should occur regularly among all stakeholders, starting with implementation (Mizell, 1978). In other words, administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, mentors and even students were not included in this process of maintaining and improving the ISS program.

Further, Sheets (1996) suggested that an effective ISS program should include an additional evaluative component. An evaluative component would consider student behavioral changes over time to assist in identifying accomplishments and changes that need to be made in the program. Evaluations should be given to all staff and students who participate in the program. In addition, Sheets (1996) suggested developing a committee to evaluate the ISS program. No evaluative component existed among the facilitators in this study.

Role of ISS Facilitator

Gootman (1998) advised that ISS facilitators should establish a personal relationship with students while also being steadfast in their firmness regarding expectations. This philosophy aligns with how each of the facilitators in this study perceived their role on some level. However, Sullivan (1989) also recommended that facilitators should be experienced in counseling, communicate with parents, teachers, and counselors, and look for appropriate resources to help students. This was not the case for any of the facilitators in the study. While it seemed that many of the facilitators were naturally able to counsel students, the clinical component should be present when counseling students was not present in the individual ISS programs. Additional skills and qualifications Sullivan (1989) emphasized as being important in order for ISS facilitators to be effective included strong classroom management skills, an interest in and desire to work with academically and behaviorally troubled students, and the ability to

relate to students in an empathetic, respectful, and consistent manner. Overall, all participants possessed these qualities. Unfortunately, most participants did not possess the following qualities Sullivan (1989) advised to be roles of an ISS facilitator:

- Instructional skills in general academic areas.
- A willingness to seek out a variety of appropriate resources and act as a referral agent when warranted.
- Proficiency in providing a positive atmosphere that is conducive to learning.

Overall, I believe the participants provided a positive physical atmosphere conducive to learning. It is my belief that the academic atmosphere was limited. Because many facilitators were not in a position to assist students, it could be hard for some students to learn while assigned to ISS.

Recommendations for Practice

The findings of the study, in the context of the existing research, suggested the following recommendations for practice:

1. *Create an ISS task force at the school that includes key stakeholders*. The existing research does not directly address who should be included, aside from the school counselor. Hrabak and Settles (1990) emphasized that the whole school should work together in this process, including parents. Based on the findings of this study regarding the roles and responsibilities of ISS facilitators, the task force should include ISS facilitators, administrators, teachers, parents, and students who have been assigned to the program. The task force should evaluate the current ISS

program and, if needed, establish a revised program to address the needs of all students served. The current research does provide some guidance as to models that might be implemented as well as effective evaluation practices

2. *Establish uniform requirements across the district for the role of ISS facilitator*. Facilitators should be experienced in counseling, have the skillset to properly assist with academic coursework, and have an overall interest in student well-being (Sullivan, 1989). Currently, there is only a criminal background check that takes place prior to hiring facilitators. Otherwise, there are no specified requirements that include specific educational background or work experience. In addition, I believe it is worthwhile to look at the facilitators' personality in terms of compatibility and shared vision for the program.
3. *Offer professional development opportunities to ISS facilitators*. This study revealed no professional development opportunities specific to ISS were available to facilitators. Most facilitators expressed a desire to have this training available, despite some disagreement as to the optimal time. With the disciplinary issues that school systems are dealing with and the way that those issues spread to other areas of society, it seems like training in this area minimally would be available to ISS facilitators. Often, students are sent to ISS as a first consequence for infractions that include anything from being late to school to fighting. Facilitators should be better equipped to manage the variety of academic and behavioral issues students are dealing with upon arrival to ISS. For instance, providing facilitators with strategies through professional development opportunities

potentially could allow them to work more autonomously and effectively. Being able to work in this capacity could help the facilitator feel more effective and create increased job satisfaction. It seems important to train those who work directly with these students from the beginning of their tenure as ISS facilitator. Further, issue-specific training should continue throughout the time facilitators are in this position.

4. *Consider perspectives of ISS facilitators and include their input in all conversations regarding the ISS program*. Prior to this current study, the perspectives of ISS facilitators were not included in decisions regarding the administration of ISS programs where the facilitators worked. Including information from those who possess first-hand knowledge of how the program works would be beneficial in facilitating and sustaining program effectiveness.
5. *Provide district level support for ISS facilitators in the form of a liaison*. The liaison should also have experience working in ISS and his/her role should include evaluating facilitators. Through the evaluation process, the facilitator and liaison should share strengths and weaknesses of the program and the facilitator in an effort to improve the ISS program.

Limitations

A primary limitation of this study was the selection of participants from one school district as opposed to multiple school districts. Interviewing facilitators in various geographical areas perhaps could have provided broader insights regarding the ISS program. Added to that, I did not include the perspectives of administrators, parents, and teachers. Especially since the

research suggested all stakeholders play a critical role in the success of ISS programs, including the above-referenced stakeholders' perspectives could have presented various views that were not made known in this study. However, this study only sought to understand the facilitators' viewpoints and adding additional perspectives is a recommendation for future research. Another potential limitation of this study involved not concentrating on political school climate at the school (or district office) where the interviews took place. I do not believe this affected the findings, as facilitators generally believed they were supported by their administration and did not discuss other issues. Finally, being an outsider was a limitation I mentioned initially. However, this did not seem to be problematic. Because I worked as an ISS facilitator for five years and I am still very much interested in the program's success, I believe it was easy for me to quickly establish relationships with the facilitators. Although I was an outsider, it seemed like I really wasn't and the facilitators seemed to appreciate my previous experience and interest.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research might include evaluating students assigned to ISS over an academic school year or during their entire high school career. This type of study would allow researchers to identify patterns that exist in terms of the following issues:

- Recidivism rates
- Number of times students are assigned to ISS for the same infraction
- Number of times students are assigned to ISS for a different infraction
- Number of times students are sent out of ISS for additional disciplinary action
- The behavior that resulted in student being sent out of ISS
- Number of times the same teacher is writing students up

- Number of special education students who are assigned to ISS
- Frequency and types of support special education students receive while in ISS
- Characteristics of students assigned to ISS from a critical theory standpoint

Additional research that includes teacher-student interactions also should be studied. Specifically, the interactions between teachers and students that lead to ISS assignment should be researched. It is worthwhile to establish if there are any biases at work on teachers' behalf.

For many students assigned to ISS, this program provides a safe haven for students who would otherwise be suspended out of school and at home or in the streets. Maslow (1943) indicated that physiological and safety issues must be present in order to move forward productively in society. For many of the students assigned to ISS, this has not been the case. Issues that jeopardize students' well-being include the following:

- Poverty
- Parent incarceration
- Illiteracy among parents /guardian
- Health issues in family
- Violence in family

With all of the above-referenced issues that likely impact students being sent to ISS, it is also important to address the fact that most facilitators in this study incorporated the punitive model in their ISS program. It seems worthwhile to research the reasons the academic and therapeutic models are not utilized more often. Doing so could assist in resolving many of the issues related to ISS.

Research about the hiring process for ISS facilitators could enlighten our understanding of the position. Who hires them? What are the qualifications to work in this position? Do the qualifications align with the goals for the school system's ISS program? What is required of a facilitator once hired? Are there any ongoing professional development opportunities for facilitators? Knowing this could help identify some of the current issues present in the program. For instance, if some facilitators have no experience working with students who require behavior management initiatives, their lack of experience/knowledge will potentially impact the program's success. And, the same is true regarding professional development opportunities. Further research regarding these topics will allow ISS facilitators to fully understand their role in ISS and help them be successful in managing the program. The role of the ISS facilitator seems to lack many fundamental, professional guidelines that other careers in education possess. Hopefully, future research will help the ISS program be more effective.

Final Considerations

The purpose of this study was to determine ISS facilitators' role(s) in ISS' implementation and effectiveness. During this study, I learned facilitators took time to ensure certain elements were in place for students upon arrival to the program. This included providing coursework sent from teachers. In some situations, it also included providing busy work for students to do or other activities for students to engage in like reading magazines or books. I also learned facilitators took their role seriously as it relates to consistency. Consistency in terms of maintaining the same schedule, rules, and such were emphasized by everyone. Each facilitator also seemed to understand they could not be effective without support from administrators. For me, knowing that facilitators expected administrator support to be in place is a step in the right

direction. As a previous ISS facilitator for several years, I am familiar with the consequences that result in having and lacking administrator support. I have worked under two different administrations. While one administration was very supportive, the other was not supportive at all. It made all the difference in the world to have support. Without the appropriate support in place, there can be no effective ISS program. I was very happy to learn these facilitators were receiving the support they needed.

Initially, when establishing the significance of this study, I identified gaps in the literature regarding the role and effectiveness of ISS as an issue. In addition, I found no published research specifically related to ISS facilitators' roles in ISS implementation and effectiveness. These issues suggested the relevance of this research. Findings from this study further emphasized the need for additional research. The literature available is dated and many of the models for ISS programs simply are not being implemented as theorized. This impacts the consistency of ISS as a disciplinary measure as well as its potential effectiveness. Some students are sent to ISS for minor infractions that include being tardy to class, sleeping in class, and dress code violation. At the same time, other students are sent to ISS for more severe infractions which include insubordination, cheating, and fighting. Regardless of the infraction, upon arrival, limited strategies are in place to effectively address the above-referenced issues students are dealing with that often also result in their assignment to ISS. This situation also seems to exist, in part, due to the facilitators not having clearly defined roles by their administration.

Some of the facilitators I interviewed believed ISS served as a safe haven for students who experience safety, poverty, and nutritional issues at home. In addition, students were able to complete coursework while assigned to ISS when it was nearly impossible to do so elsewhere.

These issues fall under Maslow's physiological needs and self-esteem categories (1943), which are directly related to reaching self-actualization. This gives the ISS program a unique and important function in public schools. Therefore, I believe it is extremely important to research the functionality of ISS as it relates to the overall well-being of students.

The goal is to see our youth remaining in the classroom while receiving an education. At the same time, when issues do occur (and they will) that result in disciplinary action being taken, we want to make sure the next steps are helpful in returning students to the classroom where they are able to learn best. The role of the ISS facilitator can be critical to student success.

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Appendices

Appendix A

KNOX COUNTY SCHOOLS
ANDREW JOHNSON BUILDING

Dr. James P. McIntyre, Jr., Superintendent

May 15, 2014

Gia Gray
2440 Linden Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37917

Gia Gray:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduct of your proposed research study: *The Effectiveness of In-School Suspension*

We will be supplying you with a data file via email.

In all research studies names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your studies. Do not hesitate to contact me at 865-594-1735 if you need further assistance or clarification of the research policies of Knox County Schools.

Yours truly,

John Beckett
Supervisor
Research and Evaluation

Project Number: 1314036

P.O. Box 2188 • 912 South Gay Street • Knoxville, Tennessee 37901-2188 • Telephone (865) 594-1800

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is your job title?
2. What does your job involve?
3. How did you become involved with ISS?
4. What does it means to be in this role?
5. What are the goals of ISS?
6. Are there any expectations of you as someone who oversees ISS?
7. What do you see as a person who works in ISS?
8. What is it like to work in ISS?
9. What does a typical day look like in ISS?
10. What do you believe about the ISS process?
11. Do you see ISS as a way to help students?
12. What is your relationship with students assigned to ISS?
13. What race of students do you see most often in ISS?
14. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this program?
15. What are you thoughts regarding African American male students and ISS?
16. What is a typical infraction that results in being assigned to I SS?
17. What are the advantages of being assigned to ISS?
18. What are the disadvantages of being assigned to ISS?
19. Are the same students being repeatedly assigned to ISS?
20. Does ISS help anyone other than students?
21. Has ISS changed over time? Why?
22. Do you believe you are making a difference?
23. Do you feel any pressure as someone who oversees ISS?
24. Are you being supported by administrators?
25. What is the level of investment in ISS at your school?
26. What can you tell me that I can take back to say "this is what we need to do to make ISS better?"
27. Is there anything else you would like to share that we have not covered?

Vita

Gia Gray was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee. She graduated from Holston High School in 1990. While working as an In-School Suspension facilitator, Gia obtained a Bachelor of University Studies from the University of Tennessee, Martin in December 2008. Shortly thereafter, Gia began pursuing a master's degree in Educational Psychology with a concentration in Adult Education from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. During this time, Gia became more interested in the role of ISS facilitators and the effectiveness of the program. Upon completion of her master's degree in May 2011, Gia decided to enter a doctoral program in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies to further study issues related to ISS. While at the University of Tennessee, Gia held a Graduate Assistantship in the Department of Leadership and Policy Studies and worked in the Office of Graduate and International Admissions. Currently, Gia is the owner of How Dare We Not Be Brilliant! Educational Services™ which provides online professional development training for ISS facilitators.